

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC PROFILE WORKSHOP REPORT

EMMETT, IDAHO

11/6/2008

Process: On Thursday, November 6, 2008, Gem County, working together with the USDI Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Four Rivers Field Office, hosted a community economic profile workshop in Emmett, Idaho (Agenda attached). Thirty community leaders and agency representatives participated, plus three BLM employees and a BLM contractor. The overall purpose of the workshop was to provide an informal way for local communities to understand socio-economic trends, talk about important economic growth factors, and to begin a dialogue about how the County and BLM can make positive contributions toward community economic development. Specifically, the meeting objectives were:

- Help local community leaders better understand their economy & community
- Qualitatively assess the area's potential for different types of economic development
- Discuss local visions for a desired future
- Brainstorm how the County and/or BLM can support community efforts to achieve the desired future
- Help local leaders understand the Resource Management Plan process and the roles that Gem County and BLM can play in community economic development

Attendees:

1. Sharon Church-Pratt	Gem County Commissioner	Emmett
2. Michele Sherrer	Gem County Commissioner	Emmett
3. Lan Smith	Gem County Commissioner	Emmett
4. John Rogers	Emmett City Council	Emmett
5. Marge Lawrence	Emmett City Clerk	Emmett
6. Troy Kochner	County Planning Commission	Emmett
7. Anita Hendrix	County Planning Commission	Emmett
8. Will Maupin	County Zoning Commission	Emmett
9. Debbie Rouwenhorst	County Planning Commission	Emmett
10. Cheryl Conrad	City Zoning Commission	Emmett
11. Shawn Charters	Shadow Butte Dev Corp	Emmett
12. Pam Garrison	City Zoning Commission	Emmett
13. Wisti Rosenthal	Gem Cty Chamber of Commerce	Emmett
14. John Evans	Evans Realty/ Shadow Butte Dev	Emmett
15. Kim Reed	Gem County Road & Bridge	Emmett
16. Don Wilkerson	Gem County Zoning	Emmett
17. Shelly Hawkins-Clark	Citizen	Emmett
18. Ron Carig	Citizen	Melba
19. Dona Ong	Citizen	Nampa
20. Ron Kay	Idaho Dept of Agriculture	Emmett
21. Morris Huffman	Woody Biomass Util. Partnership	Emmett
22. Michael Williams	Gem Econ Dev Assoc (GEDA)	Emmett
23. Maria Salazar	Emmett School Dist 221	Emmett

24. Sue Beitia	Emmett School District	Emmett
25. David Little	Little Land & Livestock	Emmett
26. Ray Ingram	Idaho ATV Assoc	Emmett
27. Jim Little	Van Deusen Ranch	Emmett
28. Brad Little	Little Land & Livestock	Emmett
29. Martin Joyce	Gem County JAG	Emmett
30. Brad Hawkins-Clark	Gem County Planning	Emmett
31. Rosie Thomas	BLM	Boise
32. Mike O'Donnell	BLM	Emmett
33. Jon Beck	BLM	Boise
34. Dick Gardner	Bootstrap Solutions	Boise

The workshop began with Gem County Commissioner Michelle Sherrer and Rosie Thomas of the BLM Four Rivers Field Office, welcoming the group. After introductions, Dr. Dick Gardner, BLM contract economist to the Four Rivers Field Office, gave a brief presentation on the direct contributions of BLM to the local economy.

Gardner followed with an hour-long presentation and group conversation examining the socio-economic data on Gem County. (A pdf version of the presentation is available.) Here are his key points:

Key Point Summary

1. Expect more visitors from a rapidly growing Treasure Valley.
2. The Hispanic community is growing.
3. Commuting out of Gem County is on the rise.
4. Traditional resource industries are probably not engines of future growth.
5. Rise in self-employment signals the importance of entrepreneurs.
6. Non-labor income contributes a growing share of the county economy.
7. Gem County incomes are quite low.
8. Gem County experiences high retail leakage out of the county.

Here are summaries of comments made by participants during the discussion:

- Little Gem Cycle Park is on land of mixed ownership with some State and private land in addition to BLM. It is self-managed and not very well-managed.
- Student enrollment in Emmett schools has been declining. Hispanic students make up about 10% of enrollment.
- The sawmill closed in 2000.
- Newly employed teachers and Forest Service employees are among those commuting into Gem County.
- People don't buy here because of low cost. Instead they are looking for a more rural lifestyle.
- Among the new senior citizens moving to Gem County are retirees from California, past residents moving back, and parents of children living in Gem County.
- A big reason for the sudden decline in net farm income around 1995-6 was the Alar problem with apples, which caused prices to plummet and many orchards to be removed and converted to housing developments.
- Lodging sales are bumped by the Cherry Festival and by Firebird Raceway's summer season.

- There has been increased carpooling from Gem County into Boise. ACHD added another van this year and there are currently 30 or more riders.
- Sales in the limited number of vacation properties at Sage Hen Reservoir have slowed.
- However, hunter activity seems to have increased due to Gem County's relative close proximity to Boise.
- Congestion on I-84 and State Street has re-directed traffic in certain ways.
 - Payette commuters come through Emmett rather than drive the Interstate at rush hour.
 - The Eagle Winco has captured some shopping traffic.
 - The Nampa Mall and Costco complex has also directed traffic through Star and Middleton so as to avoid driving Eagle Road or State Street.
- Teachers see the impacts of children living in poverty and single mom households struggling to make ends meet.
- Since 2004, the percentage of students eligible for school lunches has increased to nearly 48%.

Summary: The participants enjoyed taking a close look at their community. Everyone engaged in a joint exploration of the reasons lying behind the data trends.

Community Potential Matrix: Dr. Dick Gardner then led the group through the Community Potential Matrix exercise. This exercise is intended to stretch people's ideas about how many ways their community could grow and to offer hope. By using the information about the socioeconomic condition of their county, as well as their local knowledge, participants then assess their comparative advantage for each diversification strategy. Ideally, participants end with a better idea of their community's market position and a desire to pursue strategies that are strategic because they complement their strengths.

The audience learned about twenty-one different ways to add employment in a rural community, what criteria might measure a community's potential in each area, and the types of implementation actions a community might employ to realize its potential. Examples were given of communities in the region who appear to have high potential and best match the strategy. Workshop participants scored Emmett (and the surrounding Gem County community) high, medium, or low for each strategy on individual scoring ballots. At several points after scoring a cluster of strategies, the audience engaged in small group discussions and scored a consensus ballot for their table. Small group scores were marked on a poster of the community potential matrix after the lunch break.

After finishing the initial scoring, the group looked at the average scores and discussed their comfort with them. A set of pre-existing scores ranked by a group of outside rural development experts in 2001 was then introduced. The group discussed differences between their scores and outsiders, and their consensus scores held. (The matrix table follows below.)

The group discussion found several areas of agreement:

1. The change in retailing toward big box stores has had a dramatic effect on downtown Emmett. Merchants need to recognize this reality and work to meet the needs of commuters.
2. There was considerable discomfort with the suggestion that voting down bond issues represented subconscious doubts about the long-term viability of the community.
3. The community needs to embrace the asset of the Payette River and find more ways to connect people with its beauty.
4. The idea of reaching out to retirees and Lone Eagles as residents who don't need to commute appealed to many participants as diversification strategies.

All the participants seemed to enjoy the exercise and wanted to talk more about their ideas. Time did not allow this group to talk through all differences to consensus. People seemed to understand how the exercise could shift into a meaningful talk about visions of what their community could become.

If this community potential were realized, what kind of community would emerge in Gem County? Is this consistent with your vision for the community?

The group was asked to focus on these two questions, in an effort to connect the community potential rankings for Emmett back to their own hopes and dreams. This conversation never became fully focused on the entire community vision; it remained flavored by the community potential discussion that came prior, and often featured strategies or specific elements more than visions of a desired future.

Emmett Vision: Emmett is historically an agriculture community and people would like to retain that heritage. Protecting viewsheds and increasing school enrollments are important. They are OK with some commuting, but would like to reduce it and substitute retirees, Lone Eagles, and entrepreneurs who won't leave town every work day. There is interest in making Emmett more connected both physically and socially. This includes turning the community towards the river with a greenbelt, etc, adding trails and walkways, and increasing the community web of personal connections to grow high levels of social capital. This builds on our reputation as a cohesive community; we would prefer to let the people define our vision.

GEM COUNTY COMMUNITY POTENTIAL MATRIX

	Emmett					Ave	Outside Experts
	A	B	C	D	E		Emmett
1. Value-Added Agriculture	H	M+	M+	H	M	H-	H
2. Value-Added Forest Products	M	M	M+	M	M-	M	M
3. Value-Added Mining	M	M	L	L+	M-	M-	L
4. Value-Added Fisheries & Aquaculture	M	M	L	L	L	L+	
5. Energy Diversification	L	H	M+	M	M	M	
6. Environmental Restoration	H	L	M	L	L	L+	M
7. Business Retention/Expansion	H-	H	H	M	H-	H-	H
8. Plugging Retail Leakage	H	M	M	M-	M+	M	H
9. Entrepreneurship Dev.	H	H	M	H	H	H	M
10. Business Recruitment	M-	M+	L+	M	L+	M-	H
11. Local/Regional Tourism	M+	M+	M+	H	L	M+	M
12. Pass-Through Visitor Services	H	M-	L	H	M	M	M
13. Destination Tourism	L	M-	L	L	L	L+	L
14. Cultural Tourism	L	M+	L	L	L	L+	L
15. Transportation Hub/Warehousing	L	M	L	L	L	L+	L
16. Attracting Retirees	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
17. Attracting Lone Eagles	H	H-	M	H	M	H-	H
18. Telecommunications Business	M	M	M	H	M-	M	H
19. Health Care	M	H-	M+	M	H	M+	M
20. Bedroom Community	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
21. Attract/Retain Government Offices	M+	M+	M	L+	M	M	M
Note: Communities were ranked first by individuals, then by consensus of small groups, and then averaged across small groups on November 6, 2008.							
Outside Experts scored Emmett and all Idaho communities between 400 and 10,000 population in 2001.							

What does this new direction and vision imply for our use of BLM public lands in this area? How can BLM contribute to realizing our community potential?

Finally, the group engaged in a lively brainstorming of ways that BLM might become a better partner in further community economic development in Gem County. The following comments were heard:

- ❖ People want to keep BLM lands open for multiple uses and think that developing partnerships with user groups will help them self-regulate their use and behavior.
- ❖ For motorized recreation by ATVs, participants favored the use of existing trails and even the development of a coordinated trail system for longer rides.
 - Their preference would be to limit the amount of open cross-country travel, but they do want to acknowledge and plan for the greater recreation pressures that are coming from future growth in the Treasure Valley.
- ❖ River riparian areas are important to the community's dream of connecting to the river in more ways. It is important for BLM to retain any riverfront lands they own on the Payette. Moreover, this would be a strategic target for land acquisitions, working in partnership with city and county as they seek to build a greenbelt along the river.
 - It was acknowledged that land exchanges may be a more efficient way than sales and acquisitions of land.
- ❖ There is interest in preserving the community's Western heritage with grazing allotments, stock trails, etc. the group acknowledged that problems can occur with conflicts between traditional uses and new types of recreation, but these should be managed in ways that preserve traditional uses.
- ❖ Preserving transportation corridor routes is important in places like:
 - Dewey Road extension
 - Johnson Creek
 - Indian Valley highway, even though there are issues with endangered species habitat.
- ❖ The community is generally OK with Wind power development, though there appear to be few good sites in Gem County.
- ❖ BLM could emphasize commercial development of aggregate deposits east of Highway 16 and south of the Payette River, and other similar areas. They may be very useful to future transportation and development.
- ❖ BLM should seek better noxious weed control on its lands in Gem County, working in partnership with other existing groups.
- ❖ Rosie Thomas has done an awesome job of keeping lines of communication open between BLM and local government and working at partnership projects.
- ❖ Theft of decorative rock is becoming a problem that needs attention on BLM lands. This could be turned into commercial opportunities with closer management.

Gem County & the BLM Four Rivers Field Office present
Community Economic Profile Workshop
Thursday, November 6, 2008
Emmett City Hall, 501 E. Main Street
Emmett, Idaho

The Four Rivers Field Office has begun the process of updating its Resource Management Plan, which will guide the BLM in this region for the next twenty years. This kick-off workshop will engage local residents in a discussion of the economy and demographics of Gem County. An economist will assemble and share the data, but he needs your local knowledge to help interpret how trends are affecting Gem County. A dialogue about the ways that one of the County's largest land managers, BLM, can make positive contributions toward community economic development will follow. In the spirit of giving something back to the community, a neutral facilitator will share a rural development tool with community leaders. Here's a chance to learn about the local economy of your community. Please join us for a lively discussion and enjoyable day! Lunch will be provided, and the workshop is free.

Objectives:

- Help local community leaders better understand their economy & community
- Qualitatively assess the area's potential for different types of economic development
- Discuss local visions for a desired future
- Brainstorm how Gem County and/or BLM can support community efforts to achieve the desired future
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- 9:00 AM** Welcome, Introductions, Ground Rules, Hopes for this workshop
- 9:20 How do our public lands fit into community economics?
BLM's contribution to local economies
- 9:35 Community Economic Profile – Today's Snapshot
Rain Barrel Model of Local Economy
Review Economic Profile Data
What does this data tell us?
- 10:50 Break
- 11:05 Community Potential Matrix (Scoring Emmett & Gem County)
- 12:15** Lunch
- 1:00 Review Average Scores of Community Potential
- 1:20 ***If this community potential were realized, what kind of communities would result?***
Is this consistent with our vision for our Gem County communities?
Have we preserved our values as best we can?
Can we live with the implied changes?
- 2:00 ***What does this new direction and vision imply for our use of BLM public lands in Gem County? How can BLM work with the County to contribute to realizing our community potential?***
- 3:15 PM Summary, Next Steps
- 3:30 PM** Adjourn

Please RSVP to Brad Hawkins-Clark, Gem County, 365-5144, or bhawkinsclark@co.gem.id.us

Presented by Dr. Dick Gardner, Gem County, and BLM staff