

A REGIONAL INTERMEDIARY'S APPROACH TO COMMUNITY-BASED FORESTRY:

A Case Study of Sustainable Northwest, Portland, Oregon

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Community-based forestry (CBF) has operated at a community scale for over two decades, successfully creating social and economic benefits for local people, and ecological benefits for local forests. Recent research points to the importance of “scaling-up” CBF to realize the full range and distribution of benefits that CBF groups seek to achieve.¹ Working at a regional scale offers opportunities for developing synergistic relationships between individual entities and efforts; more rapid innovation, testing, and dissemination; the development of regional efficiencies in distribution and marketing; enhancing awareness and mutual dependencies between rural, suburban, and urban areas; and addressing obstacles and barriers common to several efforts through the actions of many.

Over the last fifteen years there has been an increasing interest in and examination of CBF organizations at the local level. The proliferation of local organizations aimed at finding solutions that integrate environmental, social, and economic needs and objectives in many ways has mirrored international trends in developing countries around the globe. There has been less examination of the role of regional intermediary organizations, especially their role in the emergence of local CBF groups. This is the story of one regional intermediary organization that has employed an integrated strategy to support CBF goals at the local and regional scales. Sustainable Northwest (SNW) is a fourteen-year-old, multi-state organization that works with rural communities who seek to address the social, economic, and ecological challenges with a focus on long-term, durable solutions that are environmentally appropriate, economically equitable, and socially responsible.

Resilient natural resource-dependent communities view their resources holistically, working to find balance between all of the resources, rather than relying on just one. Having many “irons in the fire” allows community members to shift from one resource strategy to another when obstacles block development, to build on their full range of skills and talents, and to productively use all of their assets. This pro-active and integrated approach prevents communities from overusing some assets, while others lay idle. In resilient communities,

there is always an alternative to pursue – or to create.

To this end, SNW supports a number of activities related to CBF described below. The organization also supports the ranching sector through its Ranchland Renewal Program and the Western Ranchlands Network and has played a critical role in building collaboration around water and other issues in the Klamath Basin. As they are not directly related to CBF these activities are not included in this case study.

Important elements of this story include:

1. Evolution of a regional intermediary
2. Strategies for supporting CBF goals at regional scales
3. Challenges to working regionally
4. Conditions of success

Context

Throughout the Northwest, landscapes and rural communities face the shared challenge of reversing decades of disinvestment in natural and human capital. The last several decades have left the landscape degraded, local economies undercut, and extreme social conflict over how natural resources should be managed. Rural Northwest residents have experienced direct and indirect consequences of the decline in the region's natural resource industries, consistently reporting higher unemployment, poverty, and out-migration of youth than their urban counterparts. Furthermore, rural communities have felt disempowered by public participation processes favoring interest-based decision-making that gives urban environmental groups and forest products associations a disproportionate amount of influence over how the rural landscape, particularly National Forest System lands, are managed. Many rural communities have watched their local mills close and employment options disappear. Common challenges facing these communities include: Federal land ownership patterns and management decisions, a lack of Federal investment in restoration and ecosystem maintenance, and economies shaped by past cycles of ‘boom and bust’ approaches. Rural western communities also share a strong sense of place that is largely defined by their stewardship role and a commitment to finding solutions that will enable them

¹ Cheng, Antony et. al., Ford Foundation Demonstration Program Research Component, Colorado State University, 2006 (www.warnercnr.colostate.edu/frws/cbf/).

Attributes of a “Region”

There is no easy definition of a “region” or the criteria by which it should be defined. While a region includes specific places, fluid boundaries allow communities and initiatives to self-select, rather than be subject to an external determination of who is in and who is out based on geography. It is clear, however, that a “region” captures a sense of shared ecological, economic, cultural, and social dimensions. Furthermore, regional boundaries may be drawn differently, depending on the desired outcome, resulting in a nested hierarchy of levels. For example, working at the regional level to bring about policy change affecting public-lands communities will require action across most of the Western United States. A learning community may be based on shared opportunities and may be defined by forest type or ecosystem. A region may be much smaller when the objective is to connect CBF businesses forming a manufacturing or marketing cluster, as distances and transportation costs become an important variable. In general, a region for the purpose of supporting CBF practice includes:

- A mix of land ownership types so that adequate wood supplies can be available to support regional CBF value-adding businesses
- A mix of urban, suburban and rural centers, constituents, and markets for forest products, ecosystem services, and biomass energy production, and generating support and financial resources for rural communities
- A mix of lower and higher capacity groups, most of which face similar issues and opportunities, fostering peer learning and mentoring, innovation, and problem-solving
- Similar forest management issues and legal frameworks so that communities share interest in and are forming a voice around the same issues.

to stay connected to the landscape, while earning a living that can support their families and communities.

The vast majority of forests in the region are publically owned, with up to 98 percent of some counties owned and managed by the Federal government, including USDA Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. After decades of over-harvesting and fire suppression, many National Forest lands are densely blanketed with suppressed (small) trees that are vulnerable to catastrophic wildfire, insect infestation and disease and can no longer provide the necessary habitat to support important natural processes and critical habitat for terrestrial and aquatic species that are vital elements of these vast natural systems. These millions of acres of crowded

stands and degraded watersheds present both management and market challenges. Yet, the majority of dwindling federal dollars are spent on fire suppression, rather than on restoration and ecosystem management.

In the Northwest, there are also millions of privately-owned forestlands. Many of these forestlands, along with grazing lands, are adjacent to or interspersed with public lands and are important for the overall health of ecosystems and communities.² This complement of federal, state, Tribal, and private ownership create a composition of management objectives which define the West’s working landscape. Today, however, these working landscapes are rapidly being converted to residential and commercial development. Thus, in addition to the problems which define public lands management in this region, the region is now facing the loss of many of the public benefits private lands have provided including: forest products, watershed protection, wildlife habitat, recreational access, and, as a corollary, their rural heritage and local knowledge.

Western rural communities are bound together by a commitment to restore the health of the forest and their communities, and to shift from a traditionally extractive economy to one based on restoration and ecosystem management. Collaborative groups have emerged that are broadly interested in solving economic and ecological problems in a manner that does not sacrifice one for the other, reflecting the deep concern and commitment to both the ecological and social heritage of the Northwest.

Evolution of the Organization and Key Strategies

SNW was established in 1994 by concerned political leaders who saw the need for a non-partisan entity that could help find solutions to the environmental, economic and social challenges faced by citizens, communities, and businesses in the Northwest. SNW uses five principle strategies for advancing its work:

1. Going deep and staying long in a few communities to foster collaborative processes and to build local institutions able to address sustainability issues and community resilience.
2. Bridging rural and urban constituencies with education and engagement to build support for rural communities, both through investments and consumer choices.
3. The development of market-driven solutions and conservation-based enterprises that support forest ecosystems and communities.
4. Affecting the “enabling environment” that impacts the choices and lives of rural communities in the Northwest. This is primarily accomplished by reforming institutional, legislative, and administrative policy and frameworks at the regional and national levels.
5. Accelerating innovation, testing and

² Smith, Brad and David Darr, U.S. Forest Resource Facts and Historical Trends USDA Forest Service, 2004.

dissemination through peer learning, accessing technical resources and knowledge, and providing small catalytic grants.

Building Community Collaboration and Capacity Building

Early on, the organization made the strategic decision to focus in one community to see how it could help resolve some of the conflicts, find solutions and test new approaches. The community of Enterprise in Wallowa County, Oregon, invited SNW to assist in facilitating monthly discussions about the County's future. The founder of SNW writes:

This was back in 1995 in SNW's earliest days when we had no resources and were just beginning to engage rural resource-dependent communities in the Pacific Northwest who were suffering from tremendous downturns in their economies due to dramatic declines in both timber harvests and species loss. Our meetings, held in the back room of the Cloud Nine Café in the small rural town of Enterprise, Oregon, were very animated, mostly lots of anger and blame generously foisted on those insensitive government people and tree-huggers. People were desperate and besieged. After all, unemployment had jumped to an average 17 percent, sometimes reaching 23 percent. All sawmills were closed and the threat of lawsuits were rampant. This was happening everywhere. But after many meetings, the anger subsided. I guess the community was finally feeling heard. Yes, that was one of SNW's earliest contributions – just listening and hearing: empathizing. That defensive dynamic changed when the group began asking, "What do we control? What can we do for ourselves?" That's when the tides turned. That's when we began talking about how the community might tackle this elusive idea of 'sustainability' — creating jobs while conserving and restoring natural assets.

In addition to facilitating dialogue and collaboration between diverse interests, SNW's strategy was to focus on developing robust community institutions and capacity to address sustainability and increase community resilience, thereby empowering the community to tackle its own problems and create opportunities. Community resilience is defined as, "The existence, development, and engagement of community resources to thrive in a dynamic environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise. Resilient communities intentionally develop personal and collective capacity to respond to and influence change, to sustain and renew the community and to develop new trajectories for the community's future."³ To further these objectives, and what would become standard practice for SNW, the organization helped organize a community-based organization, Wallowa Resources, and provided financial support during its early years. SNW strengthened the organization's capacity by bringing in external technical

How SNW Does Its Work

SNW works to build the social context necessary for changes in behavior to occur, and ultimately leading to changes in the social and ecological systems. SNW creates gracious space for dialogue and discourse between diverse interests. It focuses on building capacity and strengthening leadership. It provides technical information, access to decision-making processes, and offers other resources for communities to create opportunities and bring about change. SNW is the convener, facilitator, coordinator, translator, mentor and coach. It holds the big picture and the long-term vision.

SNW starts with individuals and communities that define their sense of place in relationship to their land stewardship role. By working first at the local level, many of the larger issues can be debated and negotiated, trust can be built and successes achieved and celebrated at a "safe scale", where there is frequently less at stake and people are often more willing to take risks. Working locally before going regionally generally makes it easier for people to stay focused on their interests (concerns, values), rather than on their positions, making it possible to collaboratively develop solutions that work for all parties. As part of the process it is critical to address structural issues if change is to be durable.

SNW has insisted that collaboration is an organic process that emerges from the ground up and cannot be imposed from the top down and has worked to create opportunities for people to collaborate. From the core of a place-based community, SNW moves up and out engaging additional actors. At the same time, there are regional scale forums and opportunities for collaboration and to further shape the enabling environment – the infrastructure – to support communities and change in the region.

resources and information and supported the new Executive Director by connecting her to peer organizations and networks. SNW used this approach to help establish several other organizations in the region. Today, two of these organizations are recognized as national leaders in solving natural resource management issues, serve as models to countless other communities, and have provided the venue for several high-profile projects.

Bridging Rural and Urban Constituencies

At about the same time, SNW recognized that individuals, non-profits, and businesses working in diverse

³ Magis, Kristen, "Indicator 38 – Community Resilience, Literature and Practice Review: Executive Summary", Leadership Institute and Portland State University, 8/27/2007.

sectors all over the Northwest were creating and pursuing more sustainable practices. As an urban-based group, SNW was uniquely positioned to tell the stories of these rural efforts and to engage urban constituents in the conversation. *Founders of a New Northwest*, published annually between 1997 and 2003, recognized and honored these examples of sustainability and brought them regional and national attention. Later, Sustainability Forums held in Portland and elsewhere in the region provided opportunities for urban constituencies to hear directly from rural communities about their challenges, opportunities, and collaborative solutions. Attendance at the Sustainability Forums grew from approximately 800 to over 4,000 individuals from 2001 to 2004.

In addition to education and awareness building among urban constituents, SNW has brokered urban and rural interests and social landscapes by more fully engaging distant stakeholders in rural debates. In Lakeview, Oregon, for example, one of the first activities was to bring in stakeholders from outside the community to discuss the objectives for the National Forest Sustained Yield Unit and build common ground with environmental groups from around the country. More recently, the Western Stewardship Summit 2008: Restoring Community and the Landscape recognized the particular need for strategic connections among dispersed rural leaders in the West with urban-based interest groups, where distance can be a formidable barrier; and sought to increase common ground and understanding.

Market-Driven Solutions: Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities Partnership

A critical component of a forest restoration strategy is the thinning of the dense areas, removing some of the smaller diameter trees, and thus encouraging recovery of the natural structure and function, while also reducing the fuel build-up for uncontrollable fires. By creating a market for wood products made from these small diameter and under-utilized trees, an economy based on restoration and conservation can



⁴HFHC Brochure.

grow. Community-based natural resource enterprises can offer the opportunity to provide family-wage employment with benefits and keep people connected to the land and their role as stewards. However, economic revitalization efforts have encountered a variety of limiting factors, including: high poverty and unemployment, remoteness from transportation corridors, limited infrastructure, lack of markets, and limited access to capital, among others.

In response to requests from partner communities and to address some of these barriers, SNW founded the Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities Partnership (HFHC) in 2000. HFHC is “dedicated to stimulating opportunities for forest restoration and economic revitalization in rural communities of the Pacific Northwest. Its main purpose is to support locally owned wood products manufacturers who utilize wood removed during forest restoration projects and to create markets for their products. HFHC business members convert these “byproducts” - small diameter suppressed trees and underutilized species – into quality wood products – flooring, furniture, crafts, fixtures and others – thus maximizing the economic returns to the communities adjacent to the forests. We believe that by having businesses, non-profits, and others working together we can overcome challenges and capitalize on opportunities created by an emerging conservation-based economy and a growing market for environmentally and socially responsible wood products.”⁴

HFHC currently has over 70 members, including 55 businesses and 15 non-profits. It provides support to members in marketing, including research and feedback, media exposure, representation at events, a website and other materials, and referrals, as well as capacity building through peer learning, collaboration, training and small grants. In response to the growing market in LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified construction and demand for Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified products, HFHC maintains a group Chain of Custody (CoC) certificate providing a cost effective means for members to access certain green markets. Currently, 13 of the HFHC businesses participate in the group CoC.

But HFHC does far more than provide services to its members. It also connects rural members to urban partners and to each other, creating synergistic relationships. As one rural producer stated, “HFHC has connected us to not only the urban market place, which is good because we don’t have enough folks out here to impact forests and jobs, but also to each other.” HFHC shares information and creates opportunities for linkages between businesses as suppliers, buyers, and business clusters and as peers to share innovations. The most significant example of these connections is the recently developed Wood Products Distribution Center, described in the profile at the end of this case study. Similarly, some members are thinking about pooling their products to be able to respond to larger retailers, for example, selling

firewood to a regional grocery store chain. HFHC also uses small grants to members as a mechanism to support research and development of new products for dominant, underutilized species – research that would be cost-prohibitive for an individual, small rural manufacturer.

A key innovation of the HFHC Partnership and one that was instrumental in its evolution was the engagement of the wood products broker, Green Mountain Woodworks. Following its principles to partner with existing businesses where possible, SNW used Green Mountain Woodworks to source product from HFHC members and deliver it to the customer. As the HFHC Program Manager stated, “Almost everything goes through Green Mountain Woodwork. He brought a high level of professionalism and quality to the supply chain – including production, packaging, display, distribution, etc. He provided feedback from the customer to the producers and worked with them to resolve quality issues.”

The work of HFHC is critical to advancing CBF goals as it provides the social context and marketing infrastructure making it possible for community-based, natural resource enterprises to thrive; enterprises that are scaled to use what the forest has to offer, in terms of species and volumes. A SNW staff member stated, “You aren’t feeding the beast from one place. When you look across the region, you can find almost everything the market wants.” However, significant investment in educating consumers is needed and takes time. An entrepreneur stated, “It’s a waste of time to differentiate your products, if the market doesn’t recognize it.”

Supporting and linking diverse enterprises across a region also results in a more robust manufacturing sector and a stronger regional economy as imports can be replaced with locally produced goods and the multiplier for every dollar spent increases as money stays within the region longer. Collaboration makes it possible for small businesses to leverage the economies of scale needed to stay competitive, while diversification makes it possible to distribute downstream economic benefits to more people and places. Collaboration also increases business capacity as people build skills and expertise in working together.

Policy Program and Rural Voice for Conservation Coalition (RVCC)

Policy program staff writes, “Two key factors led Sustainable Northwest to establish a policy program in 2001. Our rural community and business partners requested that we play a more active role in policy decisions that affect rural communities, and the staff and board recognized that to fully achieve our mission, it was necessary to change policies and procedures.” A key principle in SNW’s approach to developing its policy program, and therefore the positions of the organization, was to ground it in the place-based work of its partner communities and business entities. Further, the organization felt that the empowerment of its rural partners in the policy making process, especially as it related to the management of public lands, was critical to overcoming the marginalization of rural people, who were from low

income, isolated communities. This has primarily been accomplished through the establishment of the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (RVCC).

RVCC is currently comprised of more than 60 western rural and local, regional and national organizations that have joined together to promote balanced conservation-based approaches to the ecological and economic problems facing the West. RVCC employs an ad-hoc organizing and membership structure with few formalities. Organizations and individuals engage and participate through working groups and attendance at the Annual Policy Meeting, various field tours, and trips to Washington, DC. SNW is dedicated to building the capacity of partner organizations to participate in national policy discussions, development, education, and media outreach. SNW undertakes research and analysis, distributes information on policy, coordinates working groups and other coalition activities, facilitates training and technical assistance, raises funds to support the activities of the partners, and works with individual partner organizations on various policy issues.

Among partner organizations interviewed, there was agreement that undertaking policy work at a regional level and having an intermediary such as SNW is critical for success. Communities across the West face many of the same issues; where decisions about land use are dominated by public policy debates often held far from local communities. Many rural communities feel isolated and powerless to affect the natural resources management policies that impact their local economies and define how the land adjacent to the community is used. Through RVCC, SNW works to ensure that rural perspectives of non-traditional constituencies are heard. The advantage is that these rural perspectives are stronger than if they were alone. Several respondents stated that, without SNW, they would not be able to keep current with developments on Capitol Hill and in Washington, D.C. and wouldn’t know the critical junctures for action. Furthermore, without SNW’s coordination and support, policy efforts would pull them away from their grassroots efforts.

In collaboration with partner communities, SNW also



works closely with the USDA Forest Service to increase effectiveness and implement regulations and guidance. As the forest management agency for much of the forest resources in the region, communities throughout the region often face similar bottlenecks, challenges and opportunities working with the Forest Service. As one respondent formerly with the Forest Service stated, “SNW has helped us identify policies and practices we could modify to make it easier for both the agency and communities to achieve our shared objectives. Where these challenges may not be so clear on a forest-by-forest basis, they are extremely apparent when looking at how we do things across multiple sites in the region.” Based on this experience, SNW has also prepared three Forest Contracting Guidebooks to foster collaboration with the agency and to help communities secure restoration and ecosystem management contracts.

Most recently, SNW has expanded its policy work at state and regional levels. For example, it is now an active participant on the Oregon Sustainability Board.

Accelerating Innovation, Testing and Dissemination: Peer Learning, Resources, and Small Grants

Central to all of SNW’s programs is peer exchange and networking, where knowledge and proven models can be transferred from experienced practitioners to other community leaders in need. Networking across a region also provides opportunities for rural practitioners to brainstorm and co-create new opportunities. As one partner stated, “Networking gets minds together, gets investments together, and gets inspiration going.” Another community partner stated, “Having a regional intermediary that brings us together is key so each community doesn’t have to start from scratch. It shortens the learning curve and allows us to take the experiment to the next level, from where someone else can start.” A recent workshop and information clearinghouse on biomass energy production is one example. It was stressed that most often this exchange is best done at a regional level, where there are shared ecological, social and economic conditions, rather than at a national level where it is, “a bit like apples and oranges.”

A critical component to fostering innovation is providing catalytic small grants. The Small Grants Fund program of HFHC, for example, allocates flexible funds that leverage local resources and serve the overall charitable purposes of HFHC. These grants are designed to assist in the development of innovation that will advance all members of the Partnership. The focus areas are: business development, community capacity building, and land management and monitoring. The RVCC project has employed a slightly different approach. In an effort to build strong leadership throughout the coalition, SNW has been able to raise a small pool of funds to contract with RVCC working group chairs. These funds help to defray the costs of managing the working groups and are aimed at building the capacity of these other organizations to take a leadership

role in advancing the solutions proposed by the coalition. The intent is to build capacity to organize and affect national policy and to create a shared leadership model for the coalition.

This approach of networking and creating synergistic relationships between groups can also result in accessing funding that was previously unavailable. For example, funding for developing biomass energy production has been available for larger scale undertakings with significant budgets, which individual organizations had not been able to access. SNW was able to bring together three communities within the region to experiment with different components of biomass energy production, leverage the learning between them, and disseminate findings more broadly to the benefit of other communities.

The Future

As the challenges and opportunities facing communities in the Northwest continue to evolve, so does SNW. With rising energy costs, communities are increasingly turning to woody biomass as a way to replace expensive imported fuels with locally generated energy. In response, SNW has provided communities with balanced information on community-scaled biomass energy production and thermal applications. Similarly, payment for ecological services, including carbon sequestration, is generating national attention. Carbon markets, for example, are creating a significant buzz and much effort is being put into developing registries to support them, but it is critical to change the discussion from one about carbon markets to one about broader, more encompassing ecosystem services markets. Any ecosystem service trading system must operate on a regional – or even national – scale in order to aggregate credits to meet market demand, match willing buyers and sellers, and increase efficiencies, among other benefits.

How these new markets will affect communities – and visa versa – is unknown. There is the potential for both the marginalization of rural communities, as well as a real opportunity to capture additional forest value streams and benefits. Given its lens of balancing ecological, community, and economic dimensions, as well as its unique position of bringing the local perspective to regional issues, SNW is weighing in on these issues.

The Ecosystem Markets Design and Implementation Project would build on emerging ecosystem service trading systems in Oregon to codify and package this knowledge and experience into a set of transferable standards, tools, and designs for multi-credit ecosystem trades of the highest quality and legitimacy that can ultimately be expanded to other markets and geographies. A number of national environmental groups, academic institutions, development non-profits, and others together have formed a network to support this project. SNW is serving as the fiscal sponsor and coordinator for this effort, as well as ensuring communities are represented.

Challenges of Working at Regional Scales

While the many advantages and benefits of working at regional scales are outlined above, there are also challenges. Working at multiple scales—going long and deep at the community level; building access to regional and national markets; affecting state and federal policy—means that achievements of various projects must be measured at different stages, with both short and long-term impacts working together to achieve a holistic mission. Very few institutions have mastered the art of measuring short and long-term impacts not to mention actions which are designed to achieve integrated results. A regional intermediary, such as SNW, is particularly affected by this challenge as they work at multiple scales and across sectors. How to measure integrated impacts is a challenge that everyone who works on the stewardship of natural resources and community economic development faces. It is a problem whose solution will require investment and dedicated attention to overcome.

As has been seen, some of SNW's greatest added value is building the social context, at regional and community levels, in which change can occur and be sustained. To accomplish this, SNW has focused on individuals and on relationships in order to build trust. But how do you measure your impact and claim success when what you do -- build capacity, strengthen leadership, facilitate discourse -- supports others to carry out demonstrative change? It is difficult for organizations such as SNW to succinctly describe what they do, measure impact, and raise funds for the "soft" process work. How do you build an organization when constituents can't express what you do?

As an increasing number of rural communities seek to create durable integrated solutions, the demand for services and support from an organization such as SNW will also outpace supply. Building the capacity of intermediaries to provide these services will be critical if scale is to be achieved within the CBF approach. But investing in the intermediaries alone will not create success. There must be direct investment in place-based organizations to build their capacity to create the physical and social infrastructure that will result in improved environmental conditions and resilient rural economies. For example, staff stated that funding for small grants is essential to seeding innovation and broadening work beyond the usual suspects and could be greatly enhanced, but that there was currently limited foundation and other support for this approach.

Cited as strength, SNW is responsive to community needs and grows with the field of practice. Given the diverse array of opportunities and challenges facing communities, how does an organization identify strategic priorities? How does it know where to invest to maximize the impact of limited funds, yet stay entrepreneurial and flexible to leverage unforeseen opportunities?

As with any intermediary, relationships with partners are continuously evolving. As some partners have wanted a

stronger role, the organization has tried to facilitate this and continues to evolve. Partners sit on the HFHC Management Group and the RVCC Core Group and are instrumental in setting directions and allocating resources. SNW staff has stated that it is an explicit part of their organizational culture to continually be vigilant about ensuring that power and resources are dispersed to the grassroots, acknowledging that the framework for this is always changing.

While being urban-based has several advantages, it requires staff to spend a significant amount of time traveling to distant rural areas to build relationships and trust, and to gain social license to work in these areas. While some intermediaries have chosen to hire out-posted staff, SNW consciously did not. Rather, as an element of its capacity building strategy, SNW has provided funding for local organizations to hire staff directly. Similarly, SNW works through its many partners, including other intermediaries, further compounding challenges in gaining recognition. The organization's commitment to working collaboratively at all scales presents this challenge in all arenas of their work.

There are also a number of challenges in fully developing complex networks of wood products producers that include multiple stages of the value-adding stream across a region. For example, some respondents stated that HFHC needs to further support value-adding manufacturing in recruiting primary processing (kilns) and reestablishing infrastructure that has been lost. Initial distrust of the for-profit sector by the non-profit world also has to be overcome. Furthermore, until the markets grow to exceed supply, there will always be some competition between suppliers, making regional collaboration more challenging, but certainly not impossible.

Conditions for Success

Given the strategies above, several of the attributes of an effective regional intermediary begin to emerge. Interviewees repeatedly cited the willingness of SNW as both an organization and as individual staff to "grow with the local partners and communities, while always bringing that regional, 30,000 feet perspective." SNW develops programs directly responding to the needs of people and communities to help restore and maintain ecological health, balance diverse interests, and promote economic opportunities. Critical to this approach is that the organization is a learning organization. As one funder stated, "SNW is an 'action tank' -- instead of just thinking, it learns through action. The organization convenes different levels of expertise, synthesizes, analyzes, and catalyzes innovation."

An effective regional intermediary has to be open, transparent, humble and empowering of its partners. If not, it can quickly become a gatekeeper and obstacle. In SNW's case, it has generally used a "hub and spoke" model or a "first among many" approach where one organization generally takes the lead and parcels out, assembles, or packages resources on behalf of the partnership. SNW has secured and distributed funds through its pass-through and small grant

and opportunities funds, fostered leadership development, and provided staff and coordination support. As one partner stated, “SNW is about capacity building. It fosters leadership not through a course or workshop, but by believing in rural organizations and communities and giving people a chance. If you struggle, they are there to help. They respect and honor local knowledge and expertise.”

A regional intermediary needs to have had experience, cultivated relationships, and to be recognized as a credible source of information at rural, urban, state, and regional levels. A regional intermediary needs to be able to have a “foot in all camps” so that it has access to various audiences where it can share stories and products, which translate into funds, consumer choices and markets, and policy change supportive of rural communities.

Finally, when working regionally and promoting replication, there is a balance to be struck between the focus on individuals and relationships (going deep and narrow) and on stepping back to develop models, including case studies, training modules, etc. (going broad and wide) in order to shorten the learning curve and have more rapid replication. SNW started with the in-depth, relationship-based work, and in the past few years moved into spreading the learning and models. This sequence of consolidating higher capacity models as a means of learning and for demonstrating success, followed by research and documentation, and finally the development of principles, lessons learned, models, and tools is the next step in the iterative evolution of this regional intermediary organization. The challenge is developing and maintaining the wide range of skills and expertise that are needed to do both congruently.

Conclusion

SNW is an integrated, regional intermediary organization that is grounded in place. As one community member stated, “SNW listens to the grassroots so it knows the issues, opportunities, and obstacles. From there, creative and responsive actions emerge.” It is vertically integrated as it promotes access to land management decision-making, restoration opportunities, and raw materials through collaboration; facilitates the capture of multiple forest value streams; and links on-the-ground action with broader policy issues that create – and limit – opportunities for community-scale work. SNW is also horizontally integrated as it links communities, businesses, and individuals together in networks and through peer learning and technical assistance, both within the region and more broadly with other actors across the country. And the organization is holistically integrated as it goes both deep in individual natural resource-based sectors, and wide working across sectors, mirroring the

ecosystems and economies of rural communities.

SNW works at a regional scale to create the enabling environment and infrastructure in which to develop and support community-level opportunities, innovation, and change. This contributes to regional, social, and economic resilience. SNW builds markets, provides catalytic investments, builds capacity through training, tools and technical assistance, connects businesses, networks communities, undertakes policy organizing and research, strengthens leadership, and builds awareness among urban constituencies.

As they work regionally to create the social context for community-scale benefit, SNW is essential to reaching CBF goals at both community and regional scales. It is important that local is not lost in the process and, in fact, remains the heart and soul of any regional effort. Regional efforts provide a critical avenue for the local influence at broader scales. At the same time, regional efforts must go beyond servicing and coordinating local efforts, to promoting regional-scale economic, social, and ecological resilience. The work of SNW and its partners supports:

- Economic resilience as many wood imports can be replaced with locally produced goods, increasing local ownership and control of resources resulting in more social and environmental benefits, and the capture and multiplier for every dollar spent increases as money stays within the region longer;
- Social resilience as people and communities build relationships and collaborate across rural, urban, and suburban contexts, are more inclusive and bring stakeholders and their creative minds to the table, and foster learning and exchange; and
- Ecological resilience as planning and decision-making can happen across land ownership types and efforts are taken to provide incentives for conservation.

However, working at a regional scale takes large investments; investment in building markets, changing policy, mentoring and peer learning, and grants for innovation, among others.

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