

“Invested Partner”
A New Role for Non-Profit Organizations
in U.S. Federal Land Management

by

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To the memory
of
Bob Langsenkamp,
a
cornerstone of the
Valle Grande Grass Bank
and an inspiration for
the New Mexico
conservation community.

Abstract

Environmental non-profit organizations have been interested in the management of U.S. federal lands since the late 1800s. Traditionally, non-profits have influenced federal land policies indirectly through advocacy, research, public education, and litigation. In the past 25 years, however, an increasing number of environmental non-profits have entered into partnerships and collaborative agreements with federal land agencies. Non-profits are now looking for ways to directly help land agencies address management challenges. This paper focuses on a new role for non-profits, the “Invested Partner,” in which the non-profit helps solve management challenges by investing significant financial resources into the partnership. To illustrate this new role, I use a case study of the Valle Grande Grass Bank program in northern New Mexico. This program is a collaborative agreement between The Conservation Fund (TCF), the USDA Forest Service, and ranchers. By purchasing a 36,000-acre grazing lease, TCF has enabled the Forest Service to overcome bureaucratic and political restraints that had previously blocked its ability to conduct fire restoration treatments. I evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of the Invested Partner role in the Valle Grande Grass Bank program using a SWOT analysis. This analysis reveals that TCF’s role as an Invested Partner was and still is critical to the success of the Valle Grande Grass Bank. Invested Partnership is an effective strategy for helping agencies manage federal land.

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I. Introduction

The federal government owns approximately one-third of all lands in the United States. Most of this land is in the West and is managed by the USDA Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service. The management of this land is a large and difficult task. Agencies must balance resource extraction, recreation, and environmental protection in the midst of changing politics, varied stakeholder demands, bureaucratic restrictions, and scientific uncertainty.

Since the late 1800s, environmental non-profit organizations have been interested in the management of federal lands. This interest spurred the creation of the Sierra Club in 1892, the National Audubon Society in 1901, and the National Wildlife Federation in 1935 (SC, 2002; NAS, 2002; NWF, 2002). Today, thousands of non-profit groups work to ensure environmental interests are incorporated into federal land policies, hoping to protect healthy, scenic, and wild lands for future generations. Towards these ends, environmental non-profits have traditionally acted to influence both the public and decision makers (Congress, presidential administrations, courts, etc.) through advocacy, research, public education, and litigation.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the rise of the modern environmental movement strengthened the influence of non-profits in federal land management. The public became increasingly interested in federal lands, demanding incorporation of non-extractive uses and values into management policies. Advocacy efforts led to the passage of landmark environmental legislation, including the Wilderness Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act, the National Forest Management Act, and others.

These new laws increased the power of the public and non-profits in land management. First, most of the new legislation called for public participation at every stage in the planning process. This provided a forum for non-profits to voice their opinions directly to agencies. Second, NEPA, coupled with the rise in public interest law firms, opened the floodgate of environmental litigation. NEPA gave non-profits the legal standing to request court injunctions to halt adverse projects and programs, while public interest law

firms provided the necessary legal expertise. Suddenly, environmental non-profits had the ability to contest specific federal decisions in court.

Environmental litigation spurred a period of confrontation and conflict between agencies and environmental non-profits. Lawsuits became an institutionalized part of the management framework with non-profits specializing in environmental litigation (e.g. Environmental Defense and the Natural Resource Defense Council) and agencies incorporating time for legal appeals in their project time-lines.

Interestingly, though, in the past thirty years a parallel movement of collaboration and partnership grew alongside conflict. The seeds of partnership began with agency efforts to gather public input and participation in accordance with the new laws. The interaction between agencies and non-profits during the public participation process spurred working relationships. Non-profits began providing a variety of services for land agencies, including operating gift shops, building and maintaining trails, and conducting education and research activities. Then in the 1990s, non-profits began directly helping agencies solve the “meat” of management challenges through innovative partnerships. For example, non-profits, agencies, and private landowners formed numerous watershed collaboratives across the West to jointly manage private and public land for ecological health. In these relationships the non-profit is an active participant in the decision-making process and in management implementation.

A new culture of collaboration has emerged, with agencies and non-profits working together to find solutions to management challenges. As part of this new culture, a new role for non-profits has formed, which I have termed the “Invested Partner.” In this role, the non-profit organization makes a significant financial investment that helps the federal agency undergo a specific project. Having invested financial resources into the partnership, the non-profit becomes an “Invested Partner” with increased clout and influence within the agency. The non-profit is then able to actively advocate within the agency bureaucracy to ensure that the project remains a priority for the agency and receives the necessary support to be successful. The Invested Partner’s return on its investment is the success of the project.

In this paper, I will characterize and analyze the role of the Invested Partner in general, and then look at a specific application: the Valle Grande Grass Bank. The Valle Grande Grass Bank is a collaborative project that focuses on rehabilitating grasslands and forests in the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests of northern New Mexico. The principal

actors in the collaboration are The Conservation Fund (a national non-profit land conservancy), the Forest Service, and ranchers. I use a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of the Valle Grande Grass Bank program to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the Invested Partner role as a solution to management challenges. Finally, I will discuss other examples and opportunities for Invested Partnerships. This new role has the potential to help agencies overcome bureaucratic, financial, and political challenges in varied management arenas.

Before analyzing the new Invested Partner role, I will describe the changing roles and relationships of federal land agencies and environmental non-profits. This establishes context for the emergence of the Invested Partner role and elucidates how it differs from traditional roles.

II. Federal Land Management

Federal land agencies face many challenges in land management, including scientific, legal, bureaucratic, and political aspects. Over the last hundred years, these challenges have evolved and changed as the American people have shifted their expectations, interests, and goals. Traditionally, land agencies have attempted to meet these challenges singularly, without the help of non-profit organizations.

This chapter examines how land agencies have altered their strategies of land management through time, responding to new goals and challenges. The chapter also looks at the current challenges faced by agencies. Increasing awareness of these challenges has helped foster the new era of collaboration and partnership and has inspired environmental non-profits to form Invested Partnerships.

A. Evolving Strategies: 1800s-2002

Marion Clawson, a leading authority on public land who served as director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) under Truman, distinguishes six overlapping “eras” of federal land management since 1782: acquisition, disposal, reservation, custodial management, intensive management, and consultation/confrontation (Figure 1). I have modified and extended Clawson’s designations to include a new era of collaboration and partnership (Figure 2).

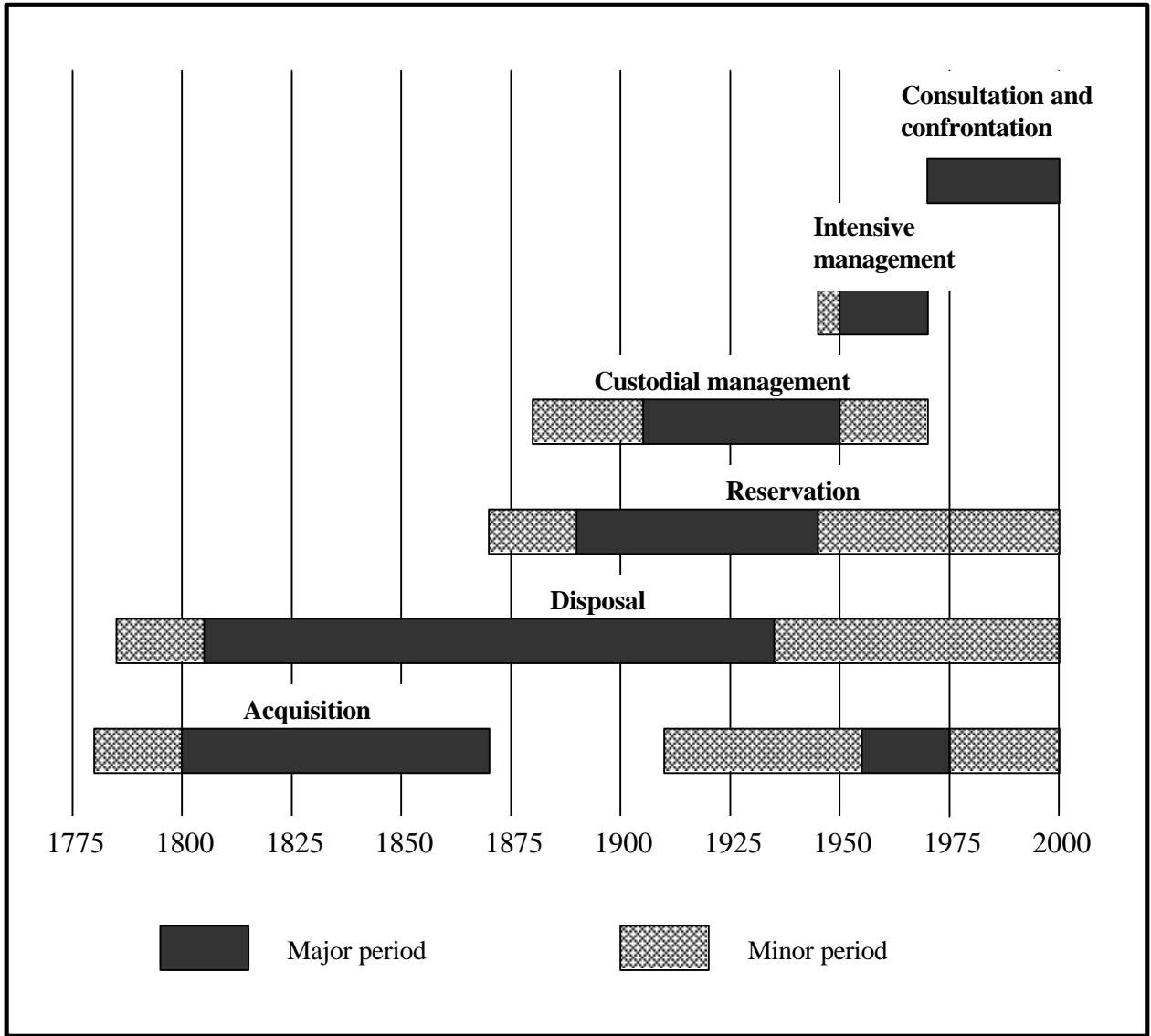


FIGURE 1. Marion Clawson's major eras of federal land ownership and management in the United States between 1782 and 2000 (Clawson, 1983).

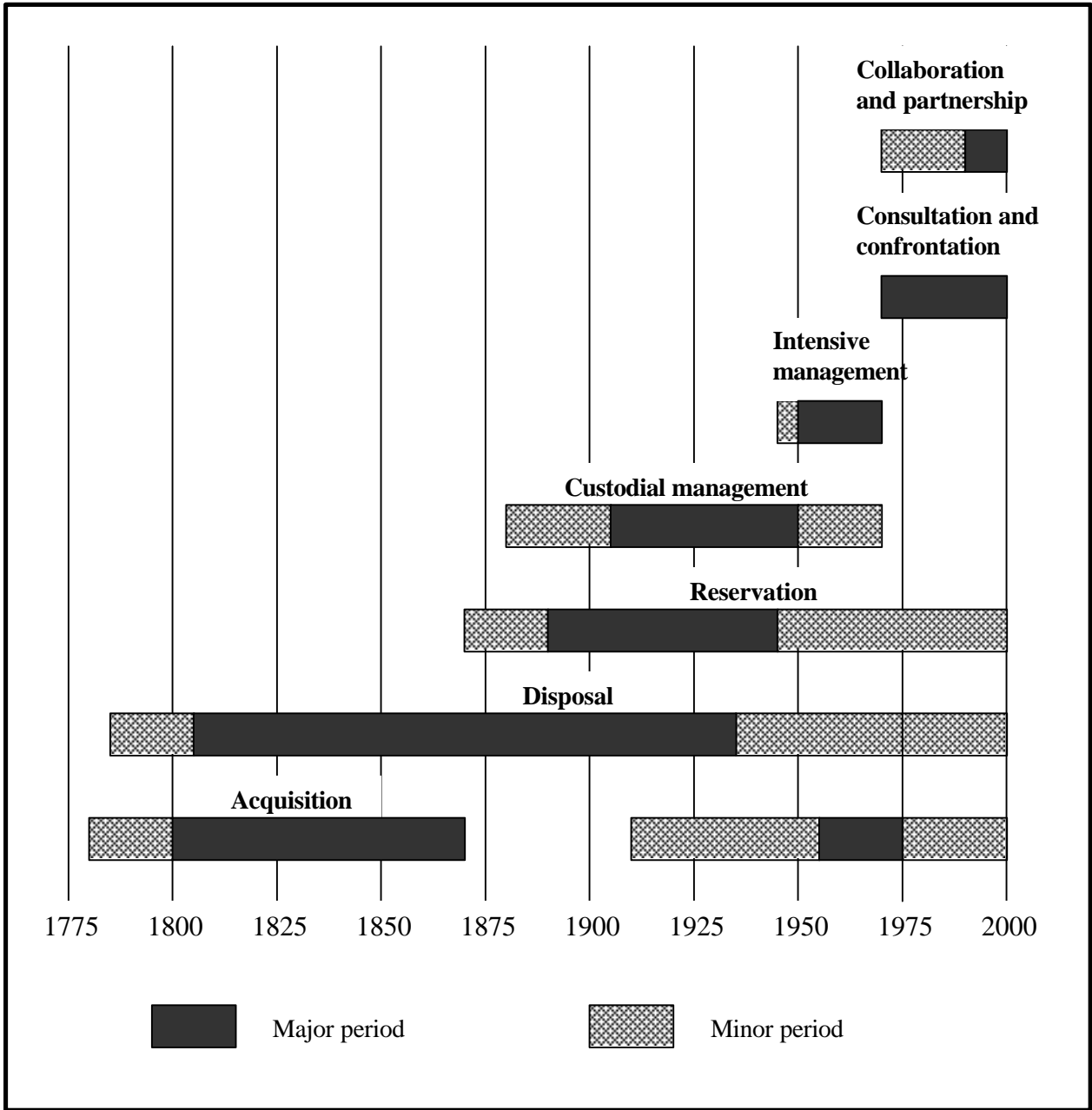


FIGURE 2. Modified version of Marion Clawson’s major eras of federal land ownership and management. Includes a new era of “collaboration and partnership.”

Prior to the late 1800s, the federal government acquired large tracks of land through land deals (purchases from France, Spain, and Russia) and through war settlements (with Mexico and Great Britain.) Almost simultaneously the government began disposing of the land to private interests, including land dealers, railroad companies, developers, colleges, and

settlers. President Franklin Roosevelt ended wholesale disposal of federal lands in 1934 following passage of the Taylor Grazing Act. Some disposal has occurred since then but at a considerably slower rate and with most sales occurring in Alaska. As shown in Figure 1, acquisition resumed in the 20th century. The federal government asserted claims to Outer Continental Shelf areas and purchased wildlife refuge, national park land, and private parcels within and adjacent to existing federal land (Clawson, 1983).

The federal government entered the arena of management with the creation of the national parks. Reservation of lands in National Parks began in 1872 with Congress' creation of Yellowstone National Park. Active management of the parks began in 1905 when John Muir of the Sierra Club convinced President Roosevelt and Congress to transfer Yosemite from state to federal control, and then appoint a trained forester to manage the new national park. President Wilson formalized the concept of management in 1916 by creating a separate National Park Service. The new agency was mandated to manage the national parks explicitly for their preservation and secondarily for public enjoyment and education (Andrews, 1999). Preservation of lands as National Parks continued throughout the century as Congress transferred portions of former BLM and Forest Service land to the Park Service.

The creation of national forest reserves extended the concept of management to natural resources, particularly forests. The Forest Reserve Act of 1891 and the Forest Management Act of 1897 created a system of forest reserves to be managed by the Department of Interior. The legislation interpreted management as preventing fire and trespass, and selling trees at appraised value. Congress established this forest system in response to scientific and public concern (primarily in the Eastern cities) that deforestation from uncontrolled commercial logging was diminishing water supplies and risking a future "timber famine" (Andrews, 1999).

The new forest reserves immediately came under attack as western states and commercial interests argued that the new system locked-up valuable forest resources. Congress approved a transfer of the forest reserves to the Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 1905 in response to this attack and also because the Interior Department did not have the necessary technical expertise to manage vast tracks of land. Gifford Pinchot and President Theodore Roosevelt heavily promoted this transfer arguing that it would aid "wise use" of

the forests for the “permanent good of the whole people, not the temporary benefit of individuals and companies” (Andrews, 1999).

Pinchot and Roosevelt believed the public interest would be best served through efficient management of forests for commodity production. Towards this end, Pinchot (as the new head of the new USDA National Forest Service) implemented scientific management for sustained yields. To successfully implement his new management system, Pinchot had to appease a variety of interests, including the livestock industry and hunting, recreation, and wilderness advocates. As a result, Pinchot took a “multiple-use” approach allowing different uses on the forests. Despite emphasis on use, access to natural resources was no longer open and uncontrolled; Pinchot implemented a permitting system and user fees for industry use on Forest Service land, including stumpage fees for timber and “animal unit month” (AUM) grazing fees (Andrews, 1999).

Gifford Pinchot’s management philosophy launched the era of “custodial management” which affected most federal lands (Clawson, 1983). The land agencies served as “custodians” of the nation’s natural resources, protecting them from fire and uncontrolled use. To prevent fire, agencies implemented suppression policies. At first, fire suppression efforts were ineffective, especially in remote areas; however, as technology improved agencies were able to attack most fires. In addition, livestock grazing aided fire suppression efforts. Grazing reduced the amount of fine fuels available to spark fires, thus decreasing the incidence of fire (Herron, 2001).

To protect resources from uncontrolled use, the land agencies and Congress implemented legislation to establish permitting systems for all public land users. In 1934, the Taylor Grazing Act established federal control over grazing activity on lands controlled by the Interior Department’s General Land Office (later to become Bureau of Land Management lands in 1946). This legislation mandated a system of grazing leases for Interior’s land. These leases specified the number of allowed livestock and also required ranchers to maintain their leases (e.g. build fences, construct irrigation systems) (Clawson, 1983; Andrews, 1999). Prior to this legislation, ranchers had unrestricted access to federal rangelands and had released millions of cattle and sheep to graze. The General Land Office also began issuing mineral leases under the 1920 Mineral Leasing Act (Clawson, 1983; Andrews, 1999).

Following implementation of leasing controls, resource extraction occurred at relatively low rates throughout the first half of the century. For example, timber extraction fluctuated between 1 and 4 billion board feet from 1905 to 1950 per year. Similarly, non-consumptive use was also minimal, with only 30 million visitors per year to national forests by 1950 (Clawson, 1983).

Then between 1950 and 1960, resource extraction and recreation use jumped to more than 9 billion board feet and 90 million recreation visits annually. Mining activity also intensified during this decade with the number of actively producing oil and gas wells doubling and total mineral receipts quadrupling. For the first time, federal lands under the BLM and the Forest Service began generating more revenue than expenditures. This intensive use of federal lands was due both to increased mobility of the American public, improved timber and mineral markets, and a new attitude by agency officials that federal lands could serve as a source of revenue for the government (Clawson, 1983).

In the 1960s, the pendulum began to swing away from intensive use of federal lands as the public became increasingly aware of environmental impacts. First, increased recreational use exposed more people to the benefits of federal lands and also heightened awareness of damage from extraction activities. Second, environmental readings (e.g. Edward Abbey) and environmental activists (e.g. David Brower) informed and inspired the public to push for wildland protection and ecologically friendly management (Davis, 2001). The public's newfound environmental interest led to a new wave of Congressional leaders and a burgeoning environmental non-profit sector. These new leaders and organizations began pushing for new legislation to protect the environment.

Numerous laws were passed, changing the goals and framework of federal land management. Table 1 lists the major pieces of legislation. The Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act (1960) and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (1976) mandated the Forest Service and BLM to broaden their mission beyond resource extraction to include recreation and wildlife preservation. Although Gifford Pinchot had originally expressed a policy of multiple-use, emphasis had remained on extractive uses until this legislation. The Wilderness Act (1964) authorized Congress to designate portions of National Forest, BLM, and Fish & Wildlife land as "wilderness" where extractive uses were forbidden. The

Endangered Species Act (ESA) institutionalized the environmental value that species extinction is an unacceptable consequence of human activity.

TABLE 1. Major Public Land Laws since 1960 (reproduced in part from Davis, 2001).

Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act of 1960
Classification and Multiple Use Act of 1964
Wilderness Act of 1964
Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1964
National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
Endangered Species Act of 1973
Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resource Planning Act of 1974
Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976
Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1976
National Forest Management Act of 1976
Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978
Alaska National Interest and Lands Conservation Act of 1980
Energy Act of 1992
California Desert Protection Act of 1994

The aforementioned laws legalized new goals for the federal agencies, requiring them to manage for non-extractive uses and values. New laws also changed agencies' decision-making process by requiring the consideration of environmental consequences and the involvement of the public in management planning. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires agencies to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) prior to undertaking any new activity. It also gave the public legal standing to sue if agencies did not sufficiently consider environmental impacts (Davis, 2001). The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resource Planning Act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, and the National Forest Management Act require public participation in the planning process (Clawson, 1983).

With the passage of these laws the public attained a voice in the planning process and also the power to wage court battles. This marked the beginning of a period that Clawson called "consultation and confrontation." I argue, however, that these laws marked the beginning of two parallel eras: consultation/consultation and collaboration/partnership. The required consultation with the public spurred both adversarial and congenial relationships between the public and agencies. Confrontation occurs when the public perceives that agencies only nominally consider their input and compromise environmental values. This

perception often leads to court cases. According to Clawson, citizen lawsuits against the land agencies were almost unknown until the passage of these new laws (Clawson, 1983). Now lawsuits are so commonplace that federal administrators expect suits and appeals following a decision. Conflict also ensues between environmental and non-environmental interest groups as they both battle to have their voices heard in public meetings and in the courtroom.

Besides initiating conflict and adversarial legal action, public participation also familiarized the public with the challenges of federal land management. These challenges are discussed in the next section. Recognition of agency challenges inspired citizen groups (particularly non-profit organizations) to partner with agencies to help manage federal land. These partnerships are discussed in Chapter IV.

Shifts in public values have dramatically changed the landscape of federal land management. In addition, new scientific knowledge has also shifted agency management strategies over the century. During the first half of the century, scientific management of renewable resources operated under two primary principals: sustained-yield and fire suppression. Managers believed that proper management consisted of keeping the “cut” below the growth rate and preventing fire from consuming the resources. Now, new scientific knowledge has revealed new operating maxims: 1) fire is a natural part of the system and essential for forest and grassland health; 2) fragmentation of habitat reduces the viability of species; and 3) resources need to be managed within the holistic context of ecosystems (Nelson, 2000; Terborgh, 1974; Noss and Cooperrider, 1994; McGinty, 1995; Christensen et al. 1996). Agencies and presidential administrations (particularly President Clinton) have been trying to incorporate these new maxims by conducting prescribed fires in accordance with a national fire plan, banning the creation of new roads to reduce habitat fragmentation (Roadless Rule of 2000), and creating an Interagency Task Force dedicated to ecosystem management (IFWG, 2000; USDA, 2001b; McGinty, 1995).

The past century has brought numerous changes to federal land management. Legal and institutional changes have increased the size of agency bureaucracies, required multiple goals, and intensified the involvement of the public in decision-making. New scientific knowledge and new goals have expanded agencies’ management roles from an overseer of industry extraction to a protector and restorer of ecosystem health. Now agencies face multi-

faceted challenges that often inhibit the ability of agencies to achieve their mandated goals. These challenges are the focus of the next section.

B. Current Management Challenges

The challenges facing land agencies have only become more difficult through time. Today, these challenges include:

1. large and varied areas of land;
2. multiple-use mandates;
3. bureaucratic and legal restrictions;
4. shifting politics;
5. diverse stakeholders and interest groups;
6. scientific uncertainty.

Environmental organizations view these challenges as impediments to proper management of the public's natural resources, and are increasingly looking for innovative ways to help agencies address these challenges. Specifically, the Invested Partner role arose as a way for non-profits to directly help agencies overcome these challenges. Each of these challenges is discussed below.

First, the public has entrusted federal agencies to care for large tracts of land. In total, the federal government owns and manages 632 million acres of land (34% of the United States). The largest land agencies are the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the USDA Forest Service, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service, which manage 230, 189, 90, and 83 million acres respectively (Healy, 2001; Platt, 1996). Additional federal entities, including the military, manage the remainder. Ninety-four percent of this land is in the eleven westernmost states and Alaska (Platt, 1996). The sheer size of land holdings makes management difficult given staff and budget restraints. Additionally, land agencies are discovering that they must tailor management regimes to individual areas to adequately protect endangered species and biodiversity. This increases the amount of work that must be done. Moreover, much federal land has privately owned

“inholdings” or adjoining land whose owners may have very different management objectives from the federal government.

Each of the land agencies is guided by a different set of legislation, most of which now emphasize management for multiple-uses. The Forest Service manages its lands for timber, grazing, water, wildlife, and recreation (Andrews, 1999). The current strategic mission of the Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests to meet the needs of present and future generations (USDA, 1997). Similarly, the BLM must manage for multiple uses, even though its primary focus is still grazing and mining. Although the Park Service is not required to provide all multiple-uses, it is mandated to protect scenic, natural, and historic characteristics of the national parks while also providing for public enjoyment and education (Andrews, 1999). The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is the only agency that primarily manages its lands for wildlife, although some multiple-uses are allowed by congressional decree, such as drilling for oil. Multiple-use mandates complicate land management by requiring agencies to focus on many different goals at once. In the view of many environmentalists, multiple-use mandates distract agencies from environmental protection.

Over the years, a large bureaucratic system has developed in response to the need to manage a large quantity of land for multiple uses. For every action, mounds of paperwork must be completed. Part of this bureaucracy developed over time as new policies were added to existing policies, but a large portion of the “red-tape” was put in place by the new environmental and planning legislation of the 1960s and 1970s. For example, the National Environmental Policy Act requires agencies to evaluate the environmental impacts of every action and obtain public comment prior to management activity. These regulations help ensure that actions will not have deleterious effects on the environment and that agencies consider public interests. On the other hand, bureaucratic policies and regulations limit the effectiveness of agencies, making it even harder to get work done.

Yet another challenge is managing amidst shifting politics. Congress decides yearly how much money each agency will receive. This decision is first influenced by the amount requested by the current presidential administration in a proposed budget. Congress then chooses to approve the requested amount, give less, or give more. Decisions are made about specific categories of management activities. For example, in 2001 Congress approved the

President's \$4.1 billion dollar budget for the Forest Service, but added \$50 million for the rehabilitation and restoration of burned lands (USDA, 2001; USDA, 2001a). These funding decisions set priorities for agencies and vary depending on political conditions. Congress also designates specific lands as wilderness under the Wilderness Act of 1964. This designation specifies which management activities can occur on these lands to protect "wilderness" values.

Additionally, politics impact internal policies. Every 4-8 years the top administrations of the agencies change with the new, incoming president. The Chief or Director remains but the Secretary and Undersecretaries are newly appointed. Often, though, the Chief or Director resigns, as did Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck in 2001. These new administrations bring partisan views and agendas. For example, the current administration of the Department of the Interior (which oversees the Park Service, the BLM, and the Fish & Wildlife Service) is pushing for increased mineral extraction on federal lands.

A wide variety of stakeholders and interest groups influence the politics of federal land management. These stakeholders include mining and timber industries, ranchers, recreational users (local and tourist), and environmentalists. Each of these groups (and subsets of these groups) lobbies Congress for legislation and appropriations serving their own interests. They also influence administrations and Congress through campaign contributions and grassroots organizing, such as letter writing. In addition, stakeholders influence agency policies during the public review process. An important force that blossomed in the 1990s is the Wise-Use and Private Property Rights movement. Although technically two movements, they have joined together to lobby for increased resource extraction and development, and privatization of public lands. This movement is working to oppose environmental legislation, arguing that these regulations destroy local jobs (Davis, 2001c).

Finally, land agencies manage in a world of scientific uncertainty. As a result, management decisions are often misguided even if well intentioned. The classic example is decades of fire suppression symbolized by Smoky the Bear. As previously discussed, the scientific community now realizes that frequent fire is essential for forest health. As a result of fire suppression, over 40 million acres of forested land are at risk of catastrophic fire, threatening both the environment and human communities (Anderson, 2000).

Non-profit organizations have helped form some of these challenges, though their involvement in “top-down” decision making (new legislation, administrative rules, etc.) and participation in local hearings and lawsuits. Many non-profits, though, have also recognized these challenges as management constraints and are working with agencies to overcome these challenges through Invested Partnerships and other partnerships. The next chapter discusses the “traditional” roles of non-profits. These roles focus on influencing decision makers and the public. Then, the subsequent chapters discuss alternative approaches where non-profits work directly with land agencies.

III. Environmental Non-Profits: Traditional Roles

Traditionally, environmental non-profits have worked to influence land management decisions through advocacy, litigation, research, and public education (Boris, 1999). Each of these methods is an attempt to guide federal policy so that environmental interests are a priority, and to limit harmful actions. In these roles, the non-profit indirectly affects land management by influencing Congress, presidential administrations, courts, and the public. In contrast, the Invested Partner directly affects land management by helping an agency overcome management obstacles.

Advocacy

Advocacy is an attempt to influence decisions and prod government into action (Young, 1999). It is used to influence politics, guide bureaucratic processes, and change legislative mandates. It is an effort to counter the voices of other stakeholders, especially resource extraction interests, to ensure that environmental interests are considered in legislation and administrative decisions. There are many types of advocacy, including legislative, administrative, legal, electoral, grassroots, corporate, media, and international (Reid, 1999). Primarily, environmental non-profits utilize legislative, administrative, and grassroots advocacy to influence federal land decisions. Tax laws require that these advocacy efforts focus on issues rather than political campaigns (Reid, 1999).

Legislative advocacy consists of non-profits lobbying, testifying, and building contacts with legislators and their staff (Reid, 1999). Environmental non-profits commonly employ legislative advocacy. It has been instrumental in the passage of environmental legislation and reform acts, especially in the 1960s and 1970s (Davis, 2001), and is used today to lobby for a myriad of reforms and laws. One common request of environmental groups is the designation of wilderness areas in accordance with the Wilderness Act. Entire non-profits are formed around this specific tactic, such as the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance in Albuquerque (NMWA, 2002). Non-profits also lobby against harmful legislation. For example, numerous non-profits recently lobbied against an energy bill that would allow oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.

Environmental groups use administrative advocacy to shape government agency rules, administrative design, and program development processes (Reid, 1999). It was used extensively in 2000 by a large network of non-profits to push for the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This Forest Service rule limits logging and road building in approximately 1/3 of all national forest lands (USDA, 2001b). Grassroots advocacy was very important in the passage of this administrative rule. Over 1.6 million public comments were received in the rule-making process, with the majority in support of the rule (USDA, 2001b). Most of these comments were generated by the efforts of non-profits that mobilized individuals to call, write, and attend public meetings. A new important tool for grassroots advocacy is the Internet. Internet technology facilitates quick dissemination of information and makes it easier for individuals to write letters.

Litigation

Since the 1970s, environmental non-profits have commonly used litigation to stop actions they perceive to be harmful to the environment. Often these harmful actions stem from scientific uncertainty, especially in relation to endangered species. They are also the result of multiple-use mandates that emphasize resource extraction, including logging, grazing, and mining. Environmental organizations argue that these resource extraction projects adversely affect natural conditions and wildlife. Environmental non-profits continually monitor agency activities and instigate lawsuits to halt management activities. In contrast, many practitioners within the agencies see resource extraction as sound management that improves the health of forests and improves productivity. These views are the result of long standing agency cultures.

The most frequent bases for environmental lawsuits are the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Successful use of litigation halted the logging in Pacific Northwest old-growth forests in the 1980s and 1990s. The Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund and other non-profits brought a variety of suits against the Forest Service citing their negligence in the care of the Northern spotted owl, a listed endangered species. This litigation sparked an intense public debate that finally led to the creation of a unique management plan that dramatically reduced logging in the Northwest (Hoberg, 2001). Litigation is also brought in defense of environmentally friendly actions.

For example, when the Mountain States Legal Foundation brought suit against the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park a consortium of environmental non-profits brought counter suit and eventually succeeded (McNamee, 1997).

Education and Research

Non-profits also use public education and outreach to further their interest. This strategy focuses on generating greater public awareness of environmental issues and increasing public appreciation for nature and wildlife. Tactics include non-profit personnel working directly with children in schools, writing school curricula for teacher implementation, hosting events in communities, and publishing pamphlets and books. All of these efforts have an indirect effect on politics and public policy decisions by expanding the number of environmentally focused constituents.

In addition, non-profit organizations attempt to inform federal land policies through research and analysis. Organizations conduct scientific experiments, monitor resource conditions, analyze existing research, compile information on specific issues, and conduct policy analyses. Organizations provide this information to agencies in hopes that their research will help address uncertainties and result in better management practices. Conferences and publications are used to convey this information to agencies. Research results also guide litigation and advocacy. Scientific documentation helps convince legislators and jurors, while also garnering public support.

The next chapter discusses the involvement of non-profits in collaborative agreements and partnerships with federal land agencies. The traditional roles described here are still the predominant roles of environmental non-profits, but more and more non-profits are assuming new roles in partnerships (e.g. the Invested Partner role).

IV. A New Era of Collaboration and Partnership

Invested Partnerships are the product of a new era of collaboration, which has emerged in the last ten years. Ed Marston of the High Country News (2001) describes this new era as follows:

“[This is] a coming of age of a new kind of environmentalism. The death is of one kind of activism in the interior West. Even in the midst of an administration hostile to the environment, appeals and lawsuits are fading: They only shut things down. More and more, environmentalism is about starting things up.

The warrior phase of the environmental movement was an honorable and exciting time. It was the good old days. Now we are in the good new days of working to re-regulate dams, free strait-jacketed rivers and heal sick forests.”

Strategies are changing, with the traditional roles of advocacy and litigation giving way to intensive, collaborative relationships with federal agencies. A cultural shift has occurred where non-profits are now looking for ways to actively help government agencies manage public land, instead of only trying to stop harmful actions through litigation or regulation. Essentially, environmental non-profits are rolling up their sleeves and are looking for ways to be proactive rather than reactive.

This new era has been slowly forming for several decades. Following the inception of new legislation in the 1960s and 1970s (as discussed in Chapter II), non-profits became increasingly aware of agencies’ management challenges. In recognition of these challenges, non-profits and agencies began forming “service partnerships.” In these partnerships, the non-profit provides volunteers and expertise while the agency often provides grant funding. In the 1990s, however, partnerships began to take on new shape. Non-profits are now directly helping agencies solve bureaucratic, political and scientific challenges by participating in stakeholder negotiations, joint-management agreements, and Invested Partnerships. These new relationships were actively encouraged by the Clinton administration. This chapter gives examples of both service partnerships and new innovations from the 1990s.

Subsequent chapters focus on the Invested Partner concept, which is a specific and very ambitious form of collaboration between environmental non-profits and federal agencies. The oldest example, of an Invested Partnership is land acquisitions by non-profits for federal agencies. For approximately 30 years, non-profits have been assisting agencies in land acquisitions through the investment of capital expenditures. However, expansion of the Invested Partner concept beyond land acquisition intensified in the 1990s as the new atmosphere of collaboration developed.

Service Partnerships

In the past thirty years, partnerships between non-profits and land agencies have become more and more common. Most of these partnerships have focused on the provision of service or information by the non-profit for the land agency. These partnerships signify an important step towards the development of the Invested Partner role; they have helped shift agency and non-profit cultures towards intensive collaboration. Like the Invested Partner, non-profits in these partnerships directly help agencies do their jobs by performing important services and providing needed information. But unlike Invested Partner relations, service partnerships do not involve large financial investments nor address the underlying challenges that hinder agency management activities.

Service partnerships help both land agencies and non-profits achieve their missions by increasing the quantity and quality of work completed on federal lands, and helping resolve scientific uncertainties. Usually the agencies provide financial and technical assistance, while non-profits provide volunteers. However, for some projects non-profits are also an important source of funding because they can apply for foundation grants.

Non-profits staff and maintain some of the most visible operations of federal lands. Volunteers staff visitor centers, gift shops, bookstores and information booths in National Parks, wildlife refuges, and other locations. Non-profit organizations sometimes also sell food at concession stands. These organizations are commonly referred to as “cooperating associations”(APPL, 2002). Over 146 different non-profits provide these services to the BLM, Forest Service, and National Park Service. Much of the income produced by these organizations is given to federal land agencies. In 1999 alone, cooperating associations

generated \$31 million for the National Park Service through revenue-sharing agreements (PHA, 2002; APPL, 2002).

Some non-profits provide research and monitoring services for federal agencies. In these partnerships, government agencies typically provide financial assistance through grants. For example, in the Urban Resources Partnership Program, the Forest Service provides financial assistance to community groups for research in forestry. Although this program focuses on urban, non-federal lands, the research is intended to help understand general forest ecology for all lands. This same program also provides technical assistance to community groups to improve the health of trees in cities (USDA, 2001c). Non-profits also form partnerships to monitor ecological conditions on federal lands. For example, The Conservation Fund in New Mexico is monitoring grassland conditions on the Valles Caldera National Preserve at the request of the Forest Service. In addition, volunteers from a variety of non-profits conduct surveys of wildlife on National Park and Forest Service land (USDA, 1998; Tuxwill, 2000; VCNP, 2002).

Non-profits provide educational and maintenance services for federal land agencies. For example, they create interpretative signs and publish nature trail guides. In addition, volunteers build and maintain trails, patrol forests, parks, and wilderness, and maintain campgrounds. Many non-profits focus solely on providing these services for their local national parks and forests, such as the Angeles Volunteer Association and the Golden Gate National Parks Association in California (AVA, 1998; Tuxwill, 2000). In the Appalachians, over 3,000 volunteers in 31 different non-profits manage and maintain the trail system on National Park lands (Endicott, 1993).

Non-profits also help land agencies with joint events and projects. Joint events often focus on completing large amounts of work in a single day. For example, the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Council in Colorado jointly hosts a trail day with the Forest Service to clear trails throughout the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness. This event attracts volunteers from throughout the community, not only volunteers of the non-profit, thus further expanding the work force. Joint projects can allow completion of habitat improvements and restoration work. Several Forest Service initiated programs, such as Get Wild! and Every Species Counts, promote partnerships with non-profits to protect special habitats and complete recovery and restoration efforts for threatened and endangered species. These partnerships

utilize non-profit volunteers, but also involve cost sharing where the non-profit helps secure additional funds (USDA, 1998). Similarly, the BLM has projects to improve wildlife habitat. For example, a partnership in New Mexico has constructed a reliable source of water for endangered desert bighorn sheep (BLM, 1997).

Service partnerships also provide information and public input for agencies. A growing trend is for land agencies to create advisory councils, comprised of members of the public at large and non-profit organizations from a variety of different stakeholder groups. One example is the New Mexico Resource Advisory Council, which recommends local standards and guidelines to the BLM that will help improve health and productivity (BLM, 1997). These councils allow environmental non-profits to influence government decisions at the state and district levels if they are invited onto the council by the land agency. In addition, there are informal arrangements among federal agency employees and non-profits. The advice of environmental non-profits is often solicited informally through personal relationships among staffs. Finally, some non-profits are paid by agencies to help organize public participation. For example, the Conservation Foundation created a film about the Resource Planning Act, with funding from the Forest Service in 1977 to help the public understand the public participation process (Healy, 2002).

New Relationships: 1990s

In the 1990s, partnerships between non-profits and federal agencies began to change form. The new relationships differ from traditional partnerships in several ways:

1. they are less service oriented;
2. they focus on trying to solve the underlying problems and challenges of land management;
3. they build interdependency.

Non-profits and agencies form close, working relationships where each is a critical partner. An atmosphere of problem solving develops as trust builds, and as shared perceptions, values, expectation, and standards become evident (Ott, 2001). No longer do non-profits bring only volunteers and foundation grants to the table, but also expertise, energy, vision,

political power, and important capital. The result is innovative programs that directly address ecological problems.

The Clinton administration was instrumental in facilitating this new atmosphere of collaboration. First, the administration actively encouraged a shift in agency culture through the creation of an interagency task force that encouraged collaborative partnerships with non-profit organizations (ITFNG, 2000). Second, the administration utilized stakeholder negotiations to address some of the most difficult controversies in the West, such as the Northern spotted owl vs. jobs and the salmon vs. dams. In these negotiations, non-profits sat at the bargaining table and helped devise management plans to resolve political challenges. One of the final products was the Northwest Forest Plan, also known as the “Clinton plan.” This is a comprehensive document that provides management direction for several national forests. Although the negotiated management plan did not prevent all political dissent and lawsuits, it does reveal a significant new interaction between agencies and non-profit organizations (Hoberg, 2001).

Changes in personnel also contributed to the shift in agency culture. For example, in the Forest Service an increasing number of employees are not trained foresters but instead have different educational backgrounds. Even the former Chief of the Forest Service, Mike Dombeck, was a biologist (FHS, 2002). In addition, there have been more appointments of senior managers from outside the agencies. Arguably, this has led to agencies that are more receptive to ideas from the outside.

The federally organized stakeholder negotiations sparked additional grassroots collaborations between stakeholders. One of the best-known examples is the Quincy Library Group (QLG) in California, which drafted a unique plan in 1993 for resource extraction and environmental protection for a tri-county area in northeastern California. This plan focused on three national forests (Lassen, Plumas, and Tahoe) but also included private lands. This area had been plagued by “timber wars” because the Forest Service had reduced timber quotas due to environmental concerns (salmon and the spotted owl), but the local economy was dependent on logging. QLG helped end these “wars” by engaging varied users (environmentalists, recreationalists, loggers, etc.) in discussions to find common ground. Then, QLG successfully lobbied for new legislation to implement new management goals and strategies for the national forests (Terhune, 1998; Davis, 2001a).

Following the Quincy Library Group example, hundreds of grazing, timber, and watershed collaboratives have emerged throughout the West (Davis, 2001a; CBCRC, 2002). Watershed collaboratives are one of the most popular forms of partnership. In these collaborations, land agencies, non-profits, and private landowners jointly devise and implement management goals for private and public lands within a given watershed. Like QLG, some of these collaboratives are seeking specific legislation to officially change agency goals. For example in Owyhee County, Idaho, a collaborative is currently seeking a legislative package to support land exchanges, wilderness designations, grassbanking, noxious weed management, modifications of stocking rates, and research areas for species that may need Endangered Species designation (Lunty, 2001). However, most of these collaboratives are finding non-legislative, “home-grown” solutions to achieve common goals through volunteer projects and collaborative agreements (CBCRC, 2002).

The Invested Partner concept has emerged from this new era of collaboration. The concept began in the 1970s when non-profits began helping agencies purchase land. In these original Invested Partnerships, the non-profit performed a “service” for the agency. In the 1990s, however, non-profits began using Invested Partnerships to help agencies solve the underlying challenges of land management. The following chapter discusses the evolution of the Invested Partner concept and its strengths and weaknesses.

V. Invested Partner

In the new era of collaboration and partnership, agencies and non-profits are working together to find solutions to management challenges. The Invested Partnership directly helps an agency implement a specific project or program by:

1. Making a significant financial investment;
2. Ensuring the project remains a priority.

The financial investment helps the agency overcome management challenges and enables it to undertake activities that it would have difficulty doing on its own. As a result, the agency can address ecological problems more effectively and efficiently. Success of the project or program is the Invested Partner's return on its investment. Therefore, after making its investment the non-profit ensures the project remains a priority for all parties involved.

To ensure success, the Invested Partner may make ongoing contributions of staff time and financial resources. Unlike federal agencies, the non-profit can apply for grants from foundations and borrow money to help fund operating costs. The non-profit can also elicit the help of other organizations/groups, forming a multi-party collaborative agreement. The Invested Partner may be able to facilitate communication between different interest groups and help form "win-win" solutions that address the concerns/needs of varied parties. Often this common ground is not found because of contentious relationships between agencies and interest groups, or between two interest groups. Because of its direct investment into the project, the Invested Partner is motivated to spend the time to form collaborative agreements that might otherwise be neglected.

Since Invested Partnership projects often require the active participation of agencies, the non-profit has a vested interest in maintaining agency interest in the project. Thus, the Invested Partner works to ensure the project remains a priority for the agency. First, the non-profit can serve as a "champion" for the project with local agency officials, keeping them excited about the project. Second, the non-profit can lobby top agency officials and Congress to ensure the project receives sufficient staff and funding. Agency officials are more receptive to these lobbying efforts because the non-profit's investment facilitated a project that the agency would have had difficulty implementing alone. In addition, the non-

profit is an independent agent, separate from the bureaucracy, and can directly approach top officials with appropriations requests.

As indicated in Table 2, the Invested Partnership has several weaknesses in addition to its numerous strengths. First, the ongoing success of the project may become dependent on the Invested Partner; the non-profit is a critical partner. This is a strength unless the non-profit can no longer participate in the program due to organizational instability or new priorities. Second, the Invested Partner may begin to bypass parts of the democratic process through abuse of its clout with the agency. The “top-down” policy process was designed to consider the interests of all Americans, not only the interests of a select few. The Invested Partner must ensure that it assists agency goals, instead of emphasizing its own priorities. Third, the non-profit could potentially lose its investment if the project fails. This might damage the financial capacity of the non-profit if it does not satisfactorily explain this loss to its members or supporting foundations.

TABLE 2. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Invested Partnership (IP).

Strengths <i>The IP helps the federal agency by:</i>	Weaknesses <i>The downsides to the IP role include:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Securing an inaccessible asset. ▪ Overcoming bureaucratic challenges. ▪ Maintaining agency interest in the project. ▪ Advocating for agency funds. ▪ Leveraging funds from foundations. ▪ Facilitating “win-win” solutions. ▪ Facilitating communication with other partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project dependent on the non-profit. ▪ Undue (non-democratic) influence of non-profit priorities. ▪ Non-profit could lose its investment.

The oldest examples of Invested Partnerships involve land acquisitions by non-profits. For twenty-five years, non-profits have actively assisted governments acquire land. This activity has blossomed into a nationwide movement involving all levels of government and thousands of non-profits. Three national land conservation organizations (Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, and the Trust for Public Land) had helped preserve over 4 million acres as of 1993, and many more are doing similar work (Endicott, 1993). The

Conservation Fund has also been a major player (Selzer, 2002).

In these partnerships, non-profits purchase parcels that the federal agency would like to acquire. Often these parcels are adjacent to or within federal lands, however some are separate (especially lands targeted by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service). After the non-profit acquires the land, then the agency purchases the land from the non-profit at cost, sometimes in installments. The land agencies are interested in these parcels to protect sensitive species, improve outdoor recreation, and consolidate boundaries for more efficient land management (GAO, 1994).

Agencies have difficulty purchasing this land because they cannot move quickly enough to close the deals. They usually do not have appropriated money on hand for this purpose and have to go through a lengthy, bureaucratic process to obtain the funds. Non-profits, on the other hand, are able to move quickly to purchase land. This speed reduces costs and allows for the purchase of lands that would otherwise be lost due to bureaucratic delays. Non-profits are also able to access land that agencies would be unable to buy because some landowners are reluctant to deal directly with federal agencies. Also, landowners are more likely to sell lands to non-profits because they can deduct the sale's profits as a charitable donation from their taxes. Often non-profits are able to secure a lower price from the landowner (below market value) because of the tax benefits (Endicott, 1993).

Non-profits involved in land acquisitions are Invested Partners because they invest significant funds into the properties, often without certainty that the agency will be able to purchase these lands in sequence. Thus, the non-profits are incurring significant financial burdens (at least in the short run) and risk. As Invested Partners, these non-profits are able to influence agency officials and help guide land acquisition programs. In fact, this leveraging power gained the attention of Congress in 1994. Congress commissioned the General Accounting Office to investigate this relationship between federal agencies and non-profits, nervous that non-profits were exerting too much influence in the partnerships and diverting the agencies away from congressional priorities (GAO, 1994). Non-profits' land acquisition priorities (e.g. sites with high biological diversity) may not match the priorities of federal land agencies (e.g. biodiversity *and* recreational opportunities). To avoid this problem, Larry Selzer, President of The Conservation Fund, has chosen to only purchase lands that agencies request (Selzer, 2002). The Conservation Fund's approach helps ensure that the non-profit

does not exert too much influence on land acquisition decisions. In addition, it reduces the non-profit's financial risk by guaranteeing that the agency will reimburse the non-profit for the land purchase.

In many ways, land acquisition by non-profits is similar to the "service partnerships" discussed in the last chapter. The non-profit provides a "service" for the agency by helping it acquire land. Unlike traditional service partnerships, though, the non-profit makes a significant financial investment. In the 1990s, the Invested Partner concept expanded beyond land acquisition to new, innovative applications. These applications help agencies solve management challenges.

The following chapter uses a case study of the Valle Grande Grass Bank to illustrate a new application of the Invested Partner role. In the Valle Grande Grass Bank, the non-profit purchased a grazing lease and helped form a collaborative agreement. This arrangement has helped the Forest Service conduct restoration treatments. The chapter analyzes the effectiveness of the Invested Partner role in this case.

VI. Case Study: Valle Grande Grass Bank

The Valle Grande Grass Bank program in northern New Mexico provides an example of an Invested Partnership. A “grassbank”¹ is a relatively new concept and was originated by the Malpai Borderlands Group in southwestern New Mexico. Fundamentally, a grassbank is a grazing project where access to grass is exchanged for conservation work. Unstocked grassland is made available to livestock from other areas so that conservation goals can be achieved on the home ranges (Mahler, 2001). The Malpai Borderlands Group’s grassbank exchanges access to grass on a privately owned ranch for the placement of conservation easements on other ranches. The goal of this grassbank is to protect open space (Page, 1997; Hadley, 1999).

The Valle Grande Grass Bank² is the second application of the grassbank concept. Unlike the Malpai Borderlands Group, however, the Valle Grande Grass Bank applies the concept to public land. The Valle Grande Grass Bank program focuses on rehabilitating forests and grasslands in the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests of northern New Mexico. Like numerous national forests throughout the West, the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests have experienced ecological decline due to fire suppression and overgrazing. Ecological health can be restored through mechanical and fire treatments. However, the Forest Service has been unable to complete sufficient treatments because the forests are stocked with cattle under existing grazing leases “owned” by private parties.

Throughout the West, ranchers graze cattle and other livestock on Forest Service and BLM land. Each rancher is entitled to the use of a specific portion of federal land (the grazing “lease” or grazing “allotment”) under the terms of a grazing permit. The permit specifies the number of livestock permitted for the area; and the federal government collects a grazing fee for each AUM (animal unit month). The grazing permit can be held by an individual or by a livestock association (a group of ranchers). Typically, a rancher (or

¹ The term “grassbank” is a registered trademark of the Malpai Borderlands Group.

² There is debate on whether grassbank is one or two words. The Valle Grande project uses two words in its official title. I use the one-word version elsewhere in the paper.

association) is eligible for a grazing permit if he/she owns a “base ranch,” a private piece of property near or adjacent to the allotment. (Davis, 2001b).

These grazing leases inhibit the ability of the Forest Service to conduct restoration treatments. Prescribed fire treatments are only successful if cattle are removed for several years (both prior and after the burn.) The Forest Service, though, has been unable to move the cattle due to bureaucratic and political constraints. These constraints limit the agency’s ability to establish an alternate location for the cattle or force ranchers to move their cattle.

The Valle Grande Grass Bank program helps the Forest Service overcome these constraints, allowing the agency to conduct restoration treatments. The program was initiated by an environmental non-profit, The Conservation Fund (TCF), which has served as an Invested Partner. TCF purchased a 36,000-acre ranch/grazing allotment for \$480,000. Then, TCF helped form a collaborative agreement between the Forest Service, ranchers, and itself. In accordance with the agreement, ranchers with public land grazing leases bring cattle onto the grassbank (TCF’s ranch/grazing allotment) while the Forest Service conduct restoration treatments on the ranchers’ home allotments. Whereas the Malpai grassbank exchanged grass for conservation easements, here grass on the grassbank is exchanged for restoration treatments on home allotments (TCF, 2001; deBuys, 2002).

The Valle Grande Grass Bank program is heralded as a success. This success is directly attributable to the actions of TCF as an Invested Partner. Through its initial purchase of the ranch/grazing lease and ongoing participation, TCF has invested money, time, and human resources into the partnership. It has also leveraged foundation funds for the project. In addition, TCF has advocated within the Forest Service, at all levels, ensuring the project remains a priority for the agency. These advocacy efforts have helped secure sufficient funding and staff for the Forest Service to conduct restoration treatments.

This chapter will discuss the Forest Service’s local management challenges that had previously hindered restoration treatments. Then, it will elaborate how TCF, as an Invested Partner, helped the Forest Service address these challenges. Finally, it assesses the relevance and effectiveness of the Invested Partner role in this case using a SWOT analysis. This analysis reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the Invested Partner role as a solution to the Forest Service’s management challenges.

A. Methods

In the summer of 2001, I interviewed 10 of the primary participants in the Valle Grande Grass Bank cooperative agreement (Appendix A). Persons interviewed include representatives from The Conservation Fund, the USDA Forest Service, the New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service, and the Northern New Mexico Stockman's Association. Conversations were also held with the executive director of the Quivira Coalition and reporter from La Jicarita News (a local Hispanic newspaper). Questions focused on identifying the challenges to starting and running the grassbank. Other questions were asked in preparation for a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.) See Appendix B for the list of questions.

Information about the Valle Grande Grass Bank was also collected from a variety of primary documents. These documents include, but are not limited to, transcripts from the 2000 conference "Grass Banks in the West: Challenges and Opportunities," local and national newspaper articles, newsletters, documents used in the formation of the collaborative agreement, meeting minutes, and correspondence.

SWOT analysis was used to determine the effectiveness of the grassbank concept and the Invested Partner role. As indicated above, SWOT is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It is a technique that corporations have traditionally used to evaluate business strategy (Ansoff 1965; Andrews 1987).

B. Local Management Challenges

The Forest Service faces a variety of ecological, political, and bureaucratic challenges in northern New Mexico. First, small trees and shrubs are invading grasslands and mature forests. This invasion is reducing ecological health and increasing the risk of catastrophic fire. The loss of grass to these trees is also limiting the amount of forage available for public-land ranchers in the area, undermining the economic foundation of local communities. The economic losses faced by ranchers exacerbate an already complicated political atmosphere, where the local Hispanic ranchers despise the Forest Service and fear environmentalists. Even though the tree invasion problem can be addressed through

prescribed fire treatments, the Forest Service has limited ability to complete these treatments because its own rules prohibit it from “buying-back” grazing allotments. As a result, the Forest Service has no place to move cattle during prescribed fires.

Ecological Problem: Tree Invasion

Ecologists estimate that since the 1930s northern New Mexico has lost over half of its grasslands to an encroachment of trees and shrubs. Dr. Craig Allen found that tree encroachment reduced the area of open montane grasslands by 55% across a 250,000-acre area between 1935 and 1981 (Allen, 1998). Similar observations have been made for a variety of vegetation types across northern New Mexico, with invasions of Engelmann and blue spruce, Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, aspen, juniper, and sagebrush overtaking mountain meadows, pine savannas, and open valleys.

These invasions have altered the ecosystems and arguably reduced ecological health. Explorers in the 1800s described Southwestern forests as open and park-like with large, widely spaced trees and abundant grasses and forbs (Oswald, 1983; Dahms, 1997). Today, dense forests are prevalent with numerous young trees and woody debris in the understory. In addition, meadows and open valleys are smaller and fragmented. These changes have altered the amount and type of food available for wildlife, affecting native animal and bird communities. They have also reduced the amount of forage available for cattle, limiting ranchers’ economic returns (Atencio, E., 2001).

In addition, the increase in woody species has increased the risk of catastrophic fire. Dense thickets of young trees provide fuel for a fire and serve as “ladder fuels” enabling the fires to reach into the tree crowns to kill large, mature trees (Oswald, 1983; USDA, 2000). In 2000, two catastrophic fires occurred on the Santa Fe National Forest. The first was the Viveash fire, which burned 30,470 acres between the towns of Pecos and Las Vegas, New Mexico. The second was the infamous Cerro Grande fire, which burned over 47,000 acres along with 235 homes and other buildings at Los Alamos, New Mexico. The Cerro Grande fire cost taxpayers millions to suppress the fire, rebuild the community, and rehabilitate burned lands (Hughes, 2000; USDA, 2001; SFNF, 2001).

Catastrophic fires also negatively affect wildlife communities by destroying mature forests. These forests comprise essential habitat for many species, including the endangered

Mexican spotted owl. The Recovery Plan for the Mexican spotted owl lists catastrophic fire as one of the two primary threats to recovery (USFWS, 1995). Large crown fires reduce canopy density, thus limiting the owl's nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat. Intense fires can also reduce breeding success by sparking nest abandonment and killing juveniles (USDA, 2001d).

Although high-intensity crown fires can be catastrophic to natural systems, the maintenance of a healthy ecosystem in northern New Mexico requires frequent, low-intensity surface fires. This type of fire historically dominated the Southwestern landscape. Tree ring analysis indicates that fires burned through forest stands every 2 to 30 years (Dahms, 1997; Herron, 2001). This fire pattern is believed to be partially attributable to American Indian management. Native cultures used fire for a variety of purposes, one of which was to enhance wildlife habitat for deer and elk (Kimmerer, 2001; Herron, 2001). Unlike some ecosystems, however, it does not appear that indigenous burning was the critical factor in the development of a fire-adapted landscape in the Southwest. The incidence of lightning is high enough in the region to spark frequent fires. However, indigenous burning was very important in some specific locales (Moore, 1999; Dahms, 1997).

Regardless of the source of ignition, forests and grasslands in the region evolved and adapted to frequent, low-intensity fires. Ecosystem health depended on regular fire to replenish grass and forbs, clear forest clutter, open meadows, recycle nutrients, and control pathogens. In addition, many species are fire-dependent and need fire to reproduce effectively. Fire also helped maintain a mixture of hardwoods and softwoods (Herron, 2001; USDA, 2000; Nelson, 2000). The patchy nature of fire created a landscape mosaic with grasslands, open forests, diverse species, and pockets of dense vegetation (Dahms, 1997).

The invasion of trees, and the subsequent decline of ecosystem health and threat of catastrophic fire, are the result of past management practices over the past 150 years (USDA, 2000). Management actions (and inaction) have aided the explosion of woody species by reducing the incidence of low-intensity, surface fires. First, a burgeoning population of livestock at the end of the 1800s resulted in significant overgrazing, which reduced the amount of grass fuel. Grass is an important fuel for surface fires when allowed to grow and dry-out. Anglo-European settlers brought in 5 million sheep and 1.3 million cattle to New Mexico by the mid-1880s, encouraged by a myth of abundant, unlimited grasslands. The

Forest Service did not start regulating the amount of livestock on national forests until 1906. It then took decades to reduce the numbers to more reasonable levels (Davis, 2001b). Second, the Forest Service instituted a regime of fire suppression (with the mascot Smoky the Bear), which actively focused on stopping all fires. This halted the historic pattern of frequent, low-intensity fires, encouraging small trees to multiply in the understory and to spread into meadows/valleys (Dahms, 1997; Herron, 2001; deBuys, 1985; Swetnam, 1999).

Politics: War on the Range

The tree invasion represents not only an ecological challenge for the Forest Service but also a political challenge. Public-land ranchers have a strong political voice in northern New Mexico. These ranchers graze their cattle on national forest, and rely on the grass resource for food and money. Most ranchers in the area are low-income Hispanic ranchers who have other full time jobs, but use their cattle as critical supplemental income. On average they own only 18 head per household and use the cattle as a source of meat for their families and as a crucial “savings-account-on-the-hoof.” Ranchers cash in on this savings account to pay for their children’s education and family emergencies (TCF, 2001; Atencio, E., 2001).

Cattle ranching also represent a cultural heritage. The New Mexico ranching tradition is one of the oldest in the nation, stemming back to the Spanish colonization in the 1500s. In fact, many of the grazing allotments correspond closely with traditional Spanish land grants, which were granted to local Hispanic communities as common property. Communities historically owned these areas in common and relied on them for grazing, timber, fuel-wood, water, and game. The water was used to irrigate community fields that provided additional food, further supporting subsistence lifestyles (deBuys, 1985).

Ranchers see the tree invasion as a threat to their livelihoods and culture. Political blame is placed on the Forest Service for the problem, even though overgrazing by ranchers was one of the causes. Hispanic ranchers in northern New Mexico harbor a general distrust and often hatred of the Forest Service. The root of the distrust/hatred is that Hispanic ranchers believe much of the land claimed by the National Forests belongs to them. At least 22% of the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests used to be patented Spanish and Mexican land grants (deBuys, 1985). The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo promised to honor all

existing land grants, but was an empty promise. Over 80% of the original land grants became National Forest in 1906 (Atencio, E., 2001).

In the 1960s, violent conflict marked the relationship between ranchers and the Forest Service. Conflict emerged when the Forest Service began instituting local changes in grazing policy, phasing out free subsistence permits and reducing livestock numbers on the forests. The Forest Service justified these changes on grounds that without reductions ranges would eventually lose their capacity to support any herds. The local ranchers, though, did not believe this argument and became outraged, believing that if they could only get their land back from the Forest Service all of their problems would be solved. Responding to this anger, Reies Lopez Tijerina founded the militant Alianza Federal de las Mercedes, an organization dedicated to restoring old land grants. The Alianza staged numerous protests and marches, and spurred considerable violence, including the infamous courthouse raid of Tierra Amarilla (deBuys, 1985).

Since the violence of the 1960s, the Forest Service has worked hard to accommodate the needs of Hispanic ranchers. Ranchers still distrust the Forest Service and are afraid to concede even more power to an agency that removed their birthright and also skeptical of agency officials that claim to know more than ranchers whose families lived on these lands for centuries (deBuys, 1985). It is a matter of principle to hate the Forest Service. Hispanic villages still grasp hope that the land grants will be restored, and the land will once again be theirs.

Further complicating the political atmosphere of northern New Mexico, various environmental groups in the area have sued the Forest Service trying to force the agency to remove cattle from the national forests. Environmental groups are concerned about ecological health. Many groups argue that cattle destroy riparian vegetation, degrade water quality, and impair biological diversity. Environmental groups are also concerned about the threat of catastrophic fire for the Mexican spotted owl. Catastrophic fire destroys the mature stands of forest that the owl needs to roost and nest. The presence of cattle limits the ability of the Forest Service to prevent these fires through prescribed fires. Also, cattle grazing prevents naturally occurring low-intensity fires because fine fuels (e.g. dry grass) do not accumulate on the ground. These low-intensity fires historically cleared the understory of debris and prevented catastrophic fire. One group in particular, the Santa-Fe based Forest

Guardians, has filled the court system in the 1990s with lawsuits trying to limit grazing in spotted owl habitat on the national forest (FG, 2002). Ranchers view these actions as yet another threat to their livelihoods and culture, and perceive that environmentalists “just don’t want us around [and] are going to do whatever it takes to make sure we won’t be around very much longer.”³

Fear of environmentalists intensifies the desire for ranchers to gain back control of the land from the Forest Service. Ranchers contend that if land grants were re-established then environmentalists would not be able to exert influence over management decisions.

Bureaucratic Limitations: No Room to Move

In theory, the Forest Service has the tools to address the problem of tree invasion. Prescribed fire (sometimes coupled with mechanical treatments) can restore ecological health by killing woody species in open areas and in the understory of mature forests. Low-intensity, prescribed fires restore the natural mosaic of grass in the landscape and reduce the likelihood of catastrophic fire (USDA/DOI, 1995).

This solution, however, is hindered by the need to remove cattle from prescribed burn areas prior to and after the fire. There is growing evidence that livestock need to be removed prior to a fire to ensure adequate herbaceous fuels for a surface fire (Moore, 1999). In addition, the burned area needs to be rested from grazing following the fire to allow the grasses and forbs to recover (Oswald, 1983).

The Forest Service has nowhere to move cattle to during and after prescribed fires, and it lacks the political power to demand that ranchers liquidate their herds during periods of restoration. In northern New Mexico, all grazing allotments on the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests are occupied by permittees. According to its own national rules, the Forest Service is not allowed to “buy-out” a permittee and regain grazing rights to an allotment, nor is it allowed to terminate a grazing permit at will. It has to wait until a rancher relinquishes a permit voluntarily. Few permits are turned over to the Forest Service because ranchers “sell” their permits as part of land deals. Even though ranchers do not hold a deed to the grazing permit, they are able to sell their base properties in the market for elevated prices that have

³ Cash Noland, a rancher northeast of Clifton, New Mexico (The Arizona Republic, 2000).

the “price” of the grazing permit bundled into the cost of the private land. Usually, the only permits relinquished back to the Forest Service are those for low quality land with little market value. Although the Forest Service could technically change these rules, it is bound by a century of institutional tradition. Also, “top-down” attempts to change these rules would be politically difficult because of the strong influence of ranching interest groups.

B. Invested Partnership as the Solution

As an Invested Partner, The Conservation Fund (TCF) has helped the Forest Service overcome political and bureaucratic obstacles, enabling the agency to address the ecological problem of tree invasion. In 1997, TCF purchased a 240-acre base property and a 36,000-acre grazing permit on the Santa Fe National Forest. The previous permit owner “sold” the grazing permit along with the 240-acre base property; officially, though, TCF was not the legal permittee until after it applied for and obtained the grazing permit from the Forest Service. TCF purchased this property and permit for the explicit purpose of starting a grassbank.⁴ Simultaneous to arranging the land purchase, TCF coordinated a collaborative agreement between itself, public-land ranchers, and the Forest Service. This agreement is the heart of the Valle Grande Grass Bank program.

The Valle Grande Grass Bank program is conceptually simple. It provides a place for ranchers to take their cattle while the Forest Service conducts prescribed fires on the land they lease. Participating ranchers bring their cattle from a variety of grazing allotments on both the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests. Cattle are usually on the grassbank for one to four grazing seasons, allowing for buildup of fine fuels in preparation for the fires and also enabling the land to recover afterwards.

⁴ The Conservation Fund was inspired to start a grassbank after employees took a tour of the Malpai Borderlands Group’s grassbank in southwest New Mexico (in the “bootheel”). In partnership with the Animas Foundation (AF), the Malpai Group allows ranchers to graze their cattle on the 321,000-acre Gray Ranch (owned by AF) if they place a conservation easement on their ranches. A participating rancher is entitled to an amount of grass equal in value to the easement donation. All participants are private landowners. (Page, 1997; Drummond, 1999).

A memorandum of understanding guides the collaborative agreement, and a steering committee makes decisions. The principal partners include TCF, the Forest Service, the Northern New Mexico Stockman's Association, and New Mexico State Cooperative Extension Service. The stockman's association and the cooperative extension agency represent the ranching community. Other parties, namely The Quivira Coalition (an environmental group interested in ecologically-friendly ranching), are unofficially involved in the cooperative agreement.

The Valle Grande steering committee is comprised of representatives from the principal partners listed above. The committee is the governing body for the program. One of its principal duties is deciding annually which ranchers (or grazing associations⁵) can bring cattle onto the grassbank. This decision is made after reviewing restoration proposals made by Forest Service district offices. These proposals outline the projects (including fire and mechanical treatments) that the Forest Service will undertake on a home allotment while the cattle are on the grassbank. The steering committee gives preference to Forest Service proposals that are "ready to go," with the necessary money and NEPA paperwork already in line.

In accordance with the collaborative agreement, TCF operates the grassbank (the ranch) and monitors the restoration treatments. A full time cowboy and half-time operations manager take care of the day-to-day ranch tasks (herding cattle, maintaining the water system, and fixing fences.) A full time TCF staff member (Will Barnes) also runs the monitoring program. Barnes monitors control and treatments sites for changes in species composition on each treated allotment. This information helps illuminate whether treatments do as promised: restore the grassy component of the ecosystem and reduce the number of woody species. These data also help the Forest Service understand which specific treatments work best, so it can adapt its methods accordingly.

All interviewees believed strongly that this program would not have been possible without TCF. First, TCF was able to obtain a grazing permit for a large tract of land with good grass. The Forest Service alone would not have been able to establish a grassbank on this piece of allotment because the previous permit owner "sold" the grazing permit along

⁵ Given the small size of their herds, many ranchers in the area are organized into grazing associations and graze their cattle on a single allotment as a group.

with the 240-acre base property, instead of relinquishing it to the Forest Service. The Forest Service did not have access to this permit because it is not authorized to “buy-back” grazing permits from ranchers. As a private agent, though, TCF was able to purchase the base property and the grazing permit, both of which are of sufficient quality to support cattle.

TCF made a significant financial investment into the Valle Grande Grass Bank when it purchased the ranch and grazing permit for \$480,000. Even though TCF is a well endowed non-profit, this was not pocket change. As Bill deBuys (TCF’s director of the New Mexico office) stated, “Finding the money was one of the greatest challenges of my professional career” (deBuys, 2001)

In addition to it being a lot of money, it was also a risky investment. TCF purchased the ranch for \$480,000 of which \$375,000 was the “cost” of the grazing permit. But since the selling of grazing permits occurs only in an unofficial market, TCF only held legal title to the 240-acre base property after the sale. TCF then applied for the official grazing permit from the Forest Service. The Forest Service, however, cannot grant grazing permits to organizations that do not own cattle. Since none of the cattle on the grassbank were TCF’s, the Forest Service had to disregard its own rules and grant a “non use” permit. Agency officials (including the regional director) were willing to put their reputations on the line for the project, but faced significant political pressure not to grant the permit. In particular, the lieutenant governor and the New Mexico Cattleman’s Association campaigned actively against the project. If the Forest Service officials had caved into political pressure, TCF would have lost \$375,000 and damaged its reputation with donors. Luckily, the Forest Service did not back down in its support of the project and did grant a “non use” permit to TCF.

TCF was also essential to the program because it was able to bridge the political gap between the Forest Service and ranchers. Cooperation of ranchers is essential to this collaborative agreement because the ranchers have to be willing to move their cattle to the grassbank. From the beginning of the project, TCF worked to incorporate ranchers as equal partners in the agreement. At first, TCF met significant opposition to the project from the ranching community, attending meetings where ranchers came armed with loaded guns. Ranchers feared that the Forest Service and TCF were colluding to decrease the number of

cattle on the national forest. On the other hand, since TCF was a new party in the political game, ranchers did not harbor as much deep-seated distrust as they held for the Forest Service. Ranchers started to listen as Bill deBuys explained the benefits of the project for the ranchers, namely that it would help bring back grass to the area. Gradually, ranchers began to trust TCF, distinguishing it from the environmental groups that wanted to abolish grazing and seeing it instead as an ally.

As trust grew, TCF was able to serve as an intermediary between the Forest Service and ranchers. TCF facilitated the creation of a “Q & A document” and the memorandum of understanding, both of which promised ranchers in writing that they would be able to return their cattle from the grassbank to their allotments following restoration, and that the Forest Service would not reduce the number of permitted livestock for these areas. The documents also granted first right of refusal for purchasing the base property and grazing lease to the Stockman’s association, ensuring that an environmental group with anti-ranching sentiments would not take over the project from TCF. Most importantly, though, ranchers were incorporated as an equal partner in the project. Thus, they did not have to concede more power to the Forest Service and agency officials. All groups were put on an equal playing field, all with governing power over the project.

In addition to being a critical player at the inception, TCF has also been instrumental in keeping the project running. TCF has provided staff and secured funds each year to operate the ranch and monitoring program. Some of these funds have been obtained from foundations, which are available only to non-profit organizations. Thus, TCF brought access to foundation funds to the collaborative project. It also brought fundraising expertise since its staff is experienced and talented at writing grant proposals. TCF has raised approximately \$160,000 annually to run and maintain the project (deBuys, 2002).

TCF has also been able to advocate within the Forest Service to establish and keep the project as a priority. TCF has increased clout and influence within the Forest Service because it has proven through its investments that it is dedicated to helping the Forest Service overcome management challenges. Agency officials know TCF is dedicated to helping the Forest Service restore its lands, and look to TCF as a true, indispensable partner in the project.

TCF's increased influence within the Forest Service has been essential to the success of the Valle Grande project. First, TCF has helped keep agency staff motivated, maintaining energy and excitement about the program. Second, TCF has ensured the program remains a priority for the agency. TCF has actively advocated within the bureaucracy at all levels (including the Chief of the Forest Service) to make certain the program receives necessary personnel and financial support to be successful. In particular, TCF worked to direct internal Forest Service monies to the restoration projects. TCF was able to secure these funds for the project because, as Dan Crittenden (the Pecos District Ranger on the Santa Fe National Forest) expressed, TCF was "not looking for a handout, but instead was giving a hand" (Crittenden, 2002).

Essentially, TCF has served as a "champion" of the project, keeping the "fire" burning both literally and figuratively. Unlike Forest Service staff bound by traditional staff hierarchies, TCF's staff is able to meet with agency staff at all levels of the Forest Service, including the Chief. In contrast, agency staff can only lobby their immediate superior in support of a project, not the higher levels of the agency.

In conclusion, TCF directly helped the Forest Service address the problem of tree invasion by securing a grazing permit within the private market, thus providing a place for cattle to go during restoration treatments. It also helped forge a collaborative agreement between the Forest Service and ranchers, despite adverse politics, gaining the cooperation of the ranching community. In addition, TCF has been able to help ensure the project's ongoing success. TCF is able to obtain operating funds and internal political support from the Forest Service because it has proven its dedication to the project through a risky investment. For TCF the return to its investment is the success of the project. Thus, it is in TCF's interest to continuously raise funds and lobby the agency to make sure restoration treatments are completed and the ranch continues operating.

C. SWOT Analysis: Is Invested Partnership an effective strategy?

In general, the Valle Grande Grass Bank may be considered a success. It has resulted in rehabilitation treatments on seven different allotments in the Santa Fe and Carson National

Forests. Twenty-one ranchers have participated with 1065 head of cattle over a five-year period (Langsenkamp, 2001). In addition, interviewees perceive that the Valle Grande has greatly improved relations among ranchers, environmentalists, and the Forest Service in the region. In recognition of its success, the Chief of the Forest Service awarded the program the National Range Management Award in 2000.

The SWOT analysis reveals that TCF’s role as an Invested Partner was and still is critical to the success of the Valle Grande Grass Bank. The Invested Partner role has been essential in the start-up and maintenance of the Valle Grande program. Table 3 summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of the Valle Grande Grass Bank, and the opportunities and threats facing the program.

TABLE 3. SWOT Analysis of the Valle Grande Grass Bank. Summary of the program’s strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T) as identified by the interviewees.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> s “Win-win” solution. s Constructive dialogue. s Shared learning. s Shared responsibilities. s More resources for rehabilitation projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> w Untimely completion of restoration treatments. w Organizing participants. w Slow ecological change. w Time-consuming collaborative process. w No active role for the ranchers.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Now a mainstream idea. o Widespread need for restoration treatments. o Widespread interest in grassbanking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> T Dependence on TCF. T Need for long-term funding. T Becoming “business-as-usual.” T Neglecting interests of all partners. T Too much fire money.

As indicated in Table 4, the Invested Partnership helped achieve many of the program’s strengths and opportunities. In addition, the Invested Partner role has the potential to overcome the program’s current weaknesses and threats. In this case, the Invested Partner role has been and still is an effective strategy for helping the Forest Service manage land.

It is an effective strategy, however, only as long as the Invested Partner stays in existence. The Valle Grande program depends on the services provided by the Invested

Partner. The challenge, then, is for Invested Partners to establish contingency plans and hand over the “reins” to a new organization to fill the same role.

TABLE 4. Effectiveness of the Invested Partner Role. The demonstrated and potential successes of the IP role and its weaknesses. Symbols correspond to the strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T) of the Valle Grande program, as identified in Table 3.

<p>Demonstrated Success <i>Ways the IP Role Has Already Helped</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> s “Win-win” solution. s Constructive dialogue. s Shared learning. s Shared responsibilities. s More resources for rehabilitation projects. o Now a mainstream idea. o Widespread interest in grassbanking.
<p>Potential Success <i>Ways the IP Role Could Help</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> w Untimely completion of restoration treatments. w Organizing participants. w No active role for the ranchers. T Need for long-term funding. T Becoming “business-as-usual.” T Neglecting interests of all partners. T Too much fire money.
<p>Weaknesses <i>Downsides to the IP Role</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> T Dependence on TCF.
<p>Independent Aspects <i>IP Role Does Not Affect</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> w Slow ecological change. w Time-consuming collaborative process. o Widespread need for restoration treatments.

Demonstrated Success: Ways the IP Role Has Helped

TCF’s role as an Invested Partner was instrument, directly and indirectly, in realizing the majority of the Valle Grande Grass Bank’s strengths and opportunities. First, TCF helped form a “win-win” solution to an intractable management problem by investing in a base property/allotment to serve as the grassbank, facilitating a collaborative agreement, and

ensuring the project remained a priority for the Forest Service. The project is a “win-win” solution for all partners: ranchers, the Forest Service, and environmentalists. It strengthens the economic foundation for ranchers by increasing the amount of grass available for cattle. For environmentalists, it restores ecological health by restoring the grassy component of the landscape, improving wildlife habitat. For the Forest Service, the project enables the agency to address the concerns of multiple user groups (ranchers and environmentalists) and decrease the risk of catastrophic fire for communities (TCF, 2001; Atencio, E., 2001).

Ranchers, Forest Service officials, and environmentalists are all working together to help the land, and communication has improved between and within these groups. This contrasts sharply with historical relations where tensions were high, communication was weak, dialogue was not constructive, and little was accomplished. The constructive dialogue of the Valle Grande has spilled over into other arenas, increasing the ability of these groups to work together on other projects. The program has changed the perception of what is possible in northern New Mexico. It has shown that different groups can work together towards a united goal. The consensus and trust built in the collaborative process has also armored the Valle Grande program against political attack; the original opponents of the project have quieted (deBuys, 2001; Langsengkamp, 2001; Elson, 2001; Chacon, 2001; Crittenden, 2001). TCF facilitated this constructive dialogue by bringing the different parties together and finding a common ground solution.

Through the collaborative process, the different interest groups (environmentalists, ranchers, and agency officials) have all learned from one another, and have a better understanding of their different viewpoints. TCF indirectly aided this shared educational process by spearheading the collaborative project. TCF has also conducted educational tours for the public, which have directly furthered the learning process.

First, the environmental community has learned how difficult it is to manage public land and that removal of cattle is not the only way to address ecological problems. Local environmentalists now understand the merits of proper grazing management. Second, ranchers are more aware of the ecological problems and better understand environmental arguments. Third, agency officials have learned how to be more aggressive in addressing bureaucratic challenges, how to work with different interest groups in a collaborative process, and how to share in the decision making process (Elson, 2001; Chacon, 2001;

Crittenden, 2001). As stated by Dan Crittenden (2001), Forest Service officials (particularly district rangers) are “used to having the whole enchilada and not sharing in the decision.” Agency officials have also learned about the benefits of resting land from grazing before and after a fire (Atencio, L., 2001).

Shared responsibilities between TCF and the Forest Service have been crucial to the success of the Valle Grande program. The Forest Service is responsible for planning and completing the restoration treatments, while TCF manages the ranch, conducts monitoring of the treatments, and raises money. TCF’s responsibilities represent an ongoing investment into the project because all of these efforts require money and staff time. Management of the ranch has been a particularly expensive venture for TCF due to the ranch’s isolated location and poor infrastructure.⁶

TCF’s ongoing participation as an Invested Partner has helped the local Forest Service obtain more funding for restoration projects. Advocacy efforts by TCF within the Forest Service increased the amount of funding appropriated for restoration projects on the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests. Specifically, Bill deBuys of TCF helped secure funding from the National Fire Plan (deBuys, 2001; Atencio, L., 2001).

The Invested Partner role has aided future opportunities for the grassbank concept. Now grassbanking is a mainstream idea. Future public-land grassbanks will be easier to start because it is no longer a new, radical idea and has been proven as a good idea. In particular, ranchers are less hesitant to participate in grassbanking collaborative efforts (Atencio, L., 2001). The Forest Service is also more amenable to the idea. The national office and Region 3 (which includes Arizona and New Mexico) are looking at ways to promote grassbanks through incentive programs (Bartuska, 2001; Schleusner, 2001).

⁶ The grassbank is in a relatively isolated location in comparison to other allotments on the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests. This has increased the transportation costs associated with moving cattle from other allotments. As a result, TCF has had to subsidize the transportation costs for participating ranchers to reduce the financial burden. Also, the isolated location necessitates a full-time staff member living on the mesa, which also increases costs. In addition, the location inhibits the ability of ranchers to check on their cattle, limiting their ability to help manage the cattle. Second, the water infrastructure has cost much more money and time to fix and maintain than anticipated. The water infrastructure (a well, underground pipes, and holding ponds) was already installed when the ranch/allotment was purchased, but was no longer functioning. The infrastructure is required because there is no running water on the mesa. Similarly, the ranch came equipped with electric fences. TCF staff spent considerable time and money before realizing the electric fences were not worth the effort.

TCF indirectly helped grassbanking become a mainstream idea by starting the Valle Grande. TCF also directly aided the mainstreaming of the concept by publishing articles, organizing tours and conferences, and by meeting with agency officials, including the Chief of the Forest Service and various directors. It was in the interest of TCF to “spread the word” about the program and its success to obtain an additional return on its investment. The “return” includes the creation of new grassbanks that restore forests and grasslands in other areas. A particularly influential event was the 2000 conference entitled “Grass Banks in the West: A Two-Day Conference of Ideas and Experience” (Mahler, 2001). This event inspired numerous individuals to consider and initiate grassbank projects.

TCF’s direct and indirect publicizing efforts have succeeded in mainstreaming the idea. Grassbanking is the new buzzword of the West. Twenty-two initiatives are looking at or have started a grassbank. Fifteen of these involve federal land. These grassbank initiatives are located throughout the West (see Figure 3) and are interested in using grassbanking as a tool to help address a variety of land management challenges, including rangeland restoration, land protection, watershed restoration, and ecosystem management (Harper, 2002).

Locally, several grassbank initiatives and opportunities exist that involve federal land. First, there is an opportunity for a portion of the Valles Caldera National Preserve near Las Cruces, New Mexico to be used as a grassbank. This potential grassbank would help restore Forest Service land.⁷ Second, the BLM is looking at starting a grassbank near Taos, New Mexico that would help restore both BLM and Forest Service allotments. Ranchers will potentially run this grassbank; the BLM will give ranchers a “grassbank permit” instead of a standard grazing permit (Harper, 2002).

⁷ A difficulty with using the Valles Caldera National Preserve as a grassbank is that its legislative mandate requires it to be self-supporting. It is difficult to be self-supporting when running other people’s cattle, not your own. (Atencio, L, 2001).

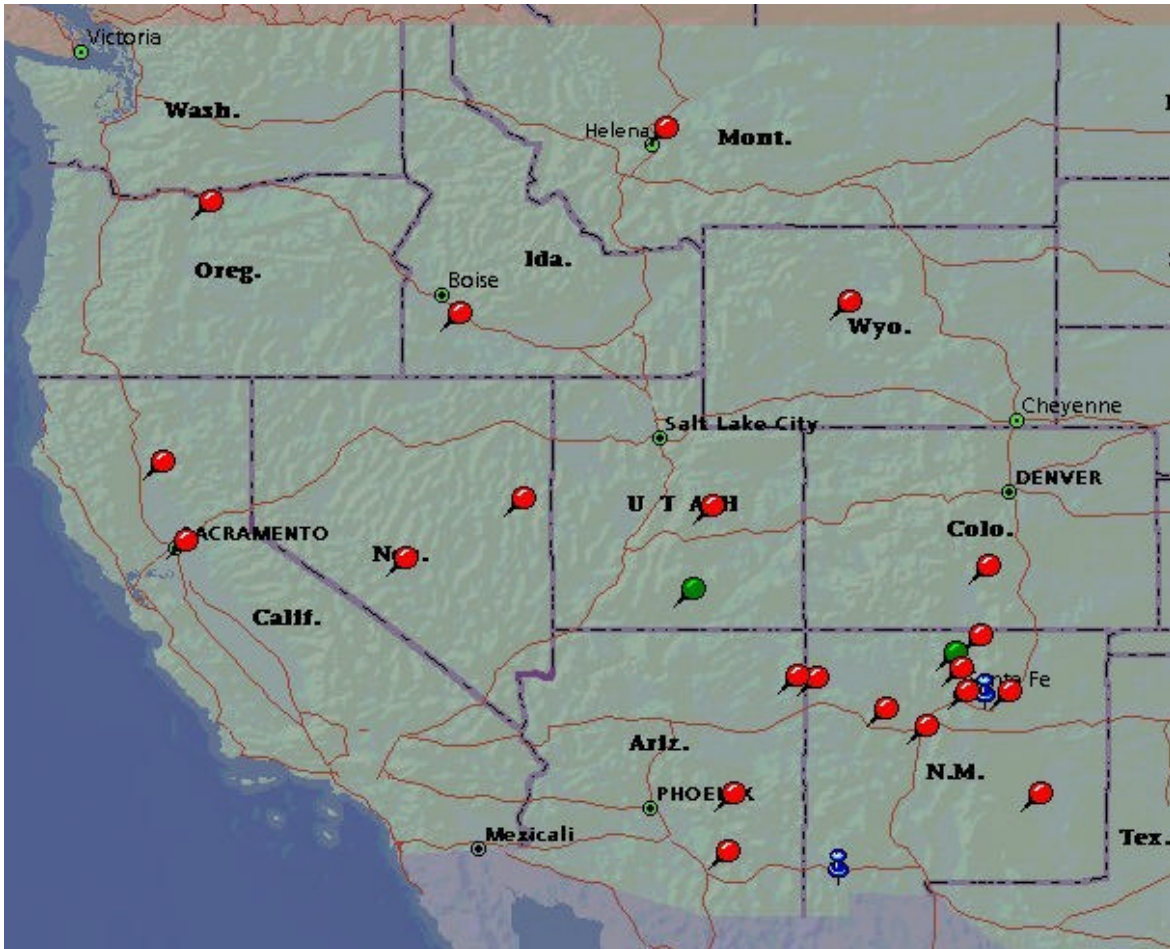


FIGURE 3. Grassbanks across the West. Blue = Current Grassbanks (Malpai and Valle Grande); Red = Grassbank Initiatives; Green = Quasi-Grassbanks. Quasi-grassbanks are projects with structural elements resembling a grassbank, but grass is not explicitly exchanged for conservation work (in accordance with the spirit of the trademark).

Potential Success: Ways the IP Role Could Help

The Valle Grande program is not the perfect picture of success, and has many weaknesses and threats. It is important to keep in mind, however, that this analysis is only a snapshot in time. TCF as an Invested Partner could potentially address these current weaknesses and threats.

Right now the weakest link in the program is the capacity of the Forest Service to execute treatments effectively and efficiently. The Forest Service is not completing

treatments in the time frame promised to the Valle Grande steering committee (deBuys, 2001; Atencio, L., 2001). This is a complex problem with several dimensions:

- All restoration projects require Environmental Assessments (EAs) in accordance with NEPA. In some cases, Forest Service officials have failed to file the proper paperwork in time to meet the promised timeline. Also, the NEPA process has taken longer in some areas than anticipated because of appeals from opposing groups, particularly Forest Guardians (Schiller, 2001). However, the Valle Grande steering committee tries to reduce this obstacle by giving preference to districts that have already completed EAs for their projects (Crittenden, 2001).
- Forest Service officials spend considerable amounts of their time in the office, filling out paperwork to comply with various regulations (including NEPA). This reduces the amount of staff time available for “on the ground” work (deBuys, 2001). Part of this office work is required by law, but is also a response to litigation. Agency officials overcompensate out of fear of litigation, thus spending the time to make EAs that are “bulletproof” (Elson, 2001).
- The Forest Service has very narrow burn windows (wind, temperature, etc.) to prevent a prescribed fire from becoming catastrophic. This reduces the amount of time each year when prescribed fires can be conducted. Now the burn windows are even narrower because the Forest Service became more cautious after the Cerro Grande fire (deBuys, 2001).
- The capacity of the Forest Service fluctuates with budget cycles. Budget allocations affect the number of field staff available to conduct treatments. As a result, managers have difficulty planning ahead (deBuys, 2001).
- The Forest Service is plagued by a high turnover rate: agency officials transfer often to secure promotions. Within two years of starting the project, new people filled fourteen of the fifteen most important positions. In general, staff stays for three years. This turnover reduces efficiency because it takes time to train and brief new staff. The turnover also limits institutional memory (Elson, 2001; White, 2001; deBuys, 2001; Crittenden, 2001).
- Crises overwhelm agency priorities. For example, in 2000 several catastrophic fires plagued the Santa Fe and Carson National Forests, including the Cerro Grande fire

and the Viveash Fire. All resources were poured into these crises, neglecting preventative projects like the restoration treatments (Elson, 2001). Even in non-crisis periods, however, the Forest Service still has difficulty managing on a priority basis (Stewart, 2001).

All of these challenges faced by Forest Service officials reduce their ability to conduct prescribed fires in accordance with their Valle Grande commitments. This frustrates the other partners in the project because the program utilizes a lot of time and money to move the cattle in preparation for treatment. Treatment delays also thwart the ability of the steering committee to plan ahead and accept new projects for other areas. If cattle from one allotment have to stay on the grassbank for 5 years instead of 3, waiting for the treatments to be completed, then other allotments are not able to access the grassbank. The “win-win” nature of the project depends on restoration actually taking place. Otherwise, ranchers and environmentalists realize no economic and ecological benefits.

TCF as an Invested Partner can help address these challenges faced by the Forest Service in the same way that it has helped the Forest Service overcome other bureaucratic challenges. TCF can work to keep the program a priority at all levels of the Forest Service, ensuring that enough staff is assigned to the program to complete necessary paperwork *and* “on the ground” work. TCF can also lobby the agency and Congress to establish reliable streams of funding for the restoration projects so the managers can plan ahead more easily. The ability of TCF to work at all levels of the Forest Service can also help keep local staff accountable to their commitments; if the Chief and national directors are watching then it will happen, despite regulatory obstacles and crises. Local staff members are also more likely to stay on track if Invested Partner staff is there to ask questions everyday and make sure the project is moving forward. These questions help keep the project at the front of staff’s mind, instead of lost in the shuffle (deBuys, 2001).

TCF can also continue to keep local staff motivated and excited about the project, and help brief new staff about the program. Essentially TCF can help maintain an institutional memory by working with new staff. It can make sure new employees uphold past commitments. Also, as suggested by Bob Langsengkamp (2001), TCF can help the Forest Service restructure its reward system to give promotions to people staying in the area.

TCF can also actively help Forest Service staff streamline the EA process. Anne Bartuska, the national Director of Forest and Range Management, indicated that the Forest Service is already trying to figure out how to reduce the time spent on EAs without compromising quality (Bartuska, 2001). Third-party interest in this question will help push that analysis through and implement its results. TCF can also help reduce the risk of litigation for individual projects by helping ensure environmental concerns are adequately addressed in the planning of projects. Similarly, TCF can directly work with potential opponents of restoration projects to diffuse the risk of lawsuits and to incorporate their concerns into the project.

A recent challenge facing the Valle Grande program is finding enough participants to fill the grassbank. In the first years of the grassbank, demand was very high with 6 applicants for every slot (Elson, 2001). Even though application numbers are down, it does not appear that rancher demand has dropped; ranchers are still very interested in participating. Instead, the root of the problem is again the Forest Service. Leonard Atencio (Forest Supervisor of the Santa Fe National Forest) believes that Forest Service staff is so busy that they are neglecting to put together treatment plans and propose them to the Valle Grande steering committee. The procedure lined out in the Valle Grande Memorandum of Understanding requires Forest Service district officials to plan restoration treatments and then request use of the grassbank for a specific time period (Atencio, L., 2001; Crittenden, 2001).

TCF could help address this challenge by working directly with local staff and their superiors. The local staff will more likely put together treatment plans if it is a priority emphasized by their supervisors. They will also complete the work if they know about the program and are excited about it. TCF can facilitate this knowledge and excitement is by hosting tours and scheduling personal meetings with the local staff.

Another current weakness is that participating ranchers do not have many responsibilities in the program. TCF takes care of the cattle while they are on the grassbank and the Forest Service takes care of the treatments. The only role for the ranchers is to agree to participate and to help with the cattle when called. As a result, the participating ranchers perceive less ownership of the project, despite the involvement of ranching representatives on the steering committee (Elson, 2001). The original idea was for participating ranchers to

learn more about the program by actively helping. However, the steering committee never implemented an active role for ranchers (Martinez, 2001). TCF can also help address this current weakness by facilitating changes in the collaborative agreement. TCF is trusted by both the Forest Service and the ranchers, and thus is in a good position to spearhead an effort to revise the program so that ranchers have a more active role.

The Valle Grande Grass Bank faces varied threats. First, long-term funding for the program might be in jeopardy. Funding is relatively easy to obtain when a project is new because charitable foundations like to fund groundbreaking work. Long-term funding, especially for day-to-day maintenance, is more difficult to obtain. The principal solution to this challenge is increasing the proportion of funds contributed by the Forest Service. However, this solution is not a guarantee given the complexity of public budgeting and periodic downsizing of government (deBuys, 2001; Langsenkamp, 2001). Another solution is charging fees to the participants (Martinez, 2001). Fees would only be politically successful, however, if it could be adequately documented that the quality of the “home” range was improved by the project. The Invested Partner can help secure long-term funding streams from the Forest Service, and ensure on a yearly basis that the budgeting process does not cut the program. As an Invested Partner, TCF can go directly to Washington D.C. and lobby for funding.

Paradoxically, increased funding to the Forest Service for prescribed burns can impede collaborative efforts. In response to the Cerro Grande fire, the local Forest Service saw a dramatic increase in funding for prescribed fires in 2001 (Jakovich, 2001). The increased funding is intended to reduce risk to communities and targets the “urban-wildland interface.” Thus, the increased funding has an explicit priority for its use. However, many of the allotments rehabilitated in the Valle Grande project are “back 40” allotments, not urban interface. The Forest Service’s financial focus on the urban interface disrupted decisions made by the collaborative Valle Grande steering committee. Bill deBuys of TCF expressed concern that the Forest Service may forget its “back 40” commitments as it scrambles to use the urban-interface fire money (deBuys, 2001). However, Leonard Atencio of the Forest Service does not share deBuys’ concern with the fire money. Atencio believes the increased funding will help the Forest Service fulfill all of its commitments in the Valle Grande program (Atencio, L., 2001).

Although too much funding represents a challenge, it is also an opportunity. First, TCF can help keep the agency accountable to the commitments it has already made, so the ranchers already on the grassbank receive the promised treatments on their allotments. Then, TCF can work with the agency and the steering committee to figure out how to capitalize on the opportunity. Even if all of the money must be used for the urban-wildland interface, cattle will still need to be moved from these areas to complete the restoration work, just like they need to be removed from more interior areas. Thus, the Valle Grande could give priority to allotments in the urban-wildland interface while the funding is abundant.

Several of the interviewees suggested that grassbanks should be institutionalized into the Forest Service, where the agency would run the grassbanks itself and a third-party would only be involved in the start-up to help obtain the permit. Bill deBuys believes, however, that the Valle Grande program would lose its effectiveness if it becomes too institutionalized in the Forest Service bureaucracy. Forest Service managers are inundated with different projects, all labeled a “priority,” and various crises. Thus, projects easily get lost in the shuffle. Bill deBuys believes grassbank programs must have a third-party “champion” to ensure the project remains a true priority within the agency, keep the project on track, and maintain enthusiasm among agency officials (deBuys, 2001). The need for an Invested Partner is not short-term, but rather ongoing.

Palemon Martinez of the Stockman’s Association expressed concern that the Valle Grande program is not adequately addressing the needs of the ranchers. Many ranchers would like to use the grassbank to help them undergo water development and fencing projects, not just restoration treatments. Also, participating ranchers would like to learn more about better management practices, such as rotational grazing and vaccinations, while their cattle are on the grassbank. This would help ranchers see immediate returns from the program (Martinez, 2001). Neglect of the ranchers’ needs/interests may threaten the Valle Grande arrangement if ranchers become frustrated with the program, and believe that their voice is secondary to the other partners. Already some of the interviewees mentioned that TCF and the Forest Service are acting like “dictators” instead of partners. Collaboration is an ongoing process that must be continuously nurtured.

Palemon Martinez of the Stockman’s Association and Gerald Chacon of the Cooperative Extension thought more meetings, especially for the steering committee, would

help solve this problem. They also thought TCF's staff makes too many of the logistical decisions instead of the steering committee. More involvement from the steering committee would help relations with the ranchers, legitimizing the operation as truly collaborative (Chacon, 2001; Martinez, 2001). TCF could help address the ranchers' concerns and interests by fostering increased communication between the three parties. TCF has a greater ability to assume this role than the Forest Service because it is a third-party, separate from the historical tensions between the Forest Service and the ranchers. TCF also has the ability to influence the Forest Service to agree to changes in the collaborative agreement because it is an Invested Partner.

Weakness: Downside to the Invested Partner Role

The principal downside to the Invested Partner role is that the program becomes dependent on the non-profit. The partnership needs the Invested Partner to continue functioning. This represents a challenge for the organization choosing to be an Invested Partner because it may be more interested in a short-term project, or individuals in the organization may tire.

This downside is already representing a challenge for the Valle Grande Grass Bank. The Conservation Fund is not interested in running the grassbank indefinitely. It would like to spin off the operation to the Stockman's Association. However, the Stockman's Association currently has neither the organizational capacity nor the track record to effectively raise funds and lobby the agency (deBuys, 2001). Individuals from the Stockman's Association would need to learn how to work at different levels and with both bureaucrats and foundations. This takes training, experience, and connections (Crittenden, 2001). TCF is working to overcome this threat by helping the Stockman's Association build capacity. First, TCF will help the Stockman's Association start a 501-C3 so it is eligible for foundation grants. Second, TCF is considering hiring an apprentice who would be trained by Bill deBuys. After a year of training, the apprentice would become the executive director of a new 501-c3 (deBuys, 2001; Elson, 2001).

Independent Aspects: Invested Partner Role Does Not Affect

Several of the weaknesses and one opportunity discussed by the interviewees are inherent to the nature of the Valle Grande project, and are unaffected by the Invested Partnership. These are briefly discussed below.

By design, the project does not generate huge, dramatic ecological change. Instead, it “chips away” at the problem a few allotments at a time. Also, fire treatments can have very uneven results thus successfully restoring only small parts of each allotment. The Valle Grande Grass Bank will not fix the ecological problem quickly, but instead will require a long-term commitment. Adding to this commitment is the necessity of the forest to be burned regularly to match natural cycles. Once an allotment has been “restored” the work is not over (deBuys, 2001; Langsenkamp, 2001).

The collaborative process is very time-consuming, especially during the start-up period. This is true whether or not an Invested Partner is involved in the collaborative process. The time commitment increases the “burn-out” rate of individuals. It also puts the ranchers at a disadvantage because they are volunteers, whereas TCF and Forest Service representatives are paid to work on the project (deBuys, 2001; Elson, 2001). In addition, the collaborative process reduces the amount of time available for completing “on the ground work.” As expressed by Jerry Elson (2001): “We spend lots of time in meetings. These meetings are so time consuming that we don’t get anything done.”

An opportunity for the grassbank concept is the widespread need for fire treatments. Bill deBuys estimates that there is sufficient need for restoration in the Western national forests to support one grassbank per forest with the capacity of up to 5% of the stocking for the entire forest. As stated by deBuys (2001), “if we collectively, as a society, assent that there is a need for fire, then we will need grassbanks.” Charlie Jakovich (2001) of the Forest Service sees a greater need than deBuys, arguing that the Santa Fe National Forest needs five to six more grassbanks to service its 78 allotments.

In conclusion, TCF as an Invested Partner has directly and indirectly aided the current successes and strengths of the Valle Grande Grass Bank. In addition, TCF has helped create opportunities for grassbank programs throughout the West, generating widespread interest in the idea. Finally, TCF could help overcome most of the program’s current weaknesses and

threats. This analysis reveals only one downside of the Invested Partner role: dependence. This weakness can be overcome by cultivating another non-profit to assume the role after the original Invested Partner leaves. Ideally, this other non-profit should be involved in the partnership from the onset to build trust among the other partners.

VII. Opportunities and Potential Applications

The Invested Partner role has the potential to help land agencies overcome management challenges. Currently, Invested Partners could help new grassbank initiatives. As mentioned above, there were twenty-two grassbank initiatives as of August 2001, fifteen of which involve federal land. Some of these new projects are pilots, while the others are in varied stages of planning. New grassbank projects focus on an array of goals, including rangeland, habitat, and watershed restoration, land protection, and ecosystem management. These projects are led by non-profit organizations, federal agencies, watershed alliances, and ranchers (Harper, 2002).

I identified these grassbank initiatives by calling approximately 150 people who had attended the 2000 conference on grassbanking. I also did a “word of mouth” search by asking each person called if they knew of initiatives. In addition, leads were obtained by sending out a request for information to the Arid Lands Grazing Network sponsored by the Nature Conservancy. Following identification of each grassbank initiative, I interviewed participating individuals. Questions focused on the challenges facing the grassbank initiative. Each interviewee was asked for his/her interpretation of the new grassbank’s greatest needs (Appendix C).

This survey revealed that Invested Partners could help many of the grassbank initiatives. The principal challenge for all of the initiatives is securing land, especially high quality land. This is true for the initiatives using public land as the grassbank and those using private land. Some of the initiatives are looking at the use of private land as the grassbank in order to leverage conservation work on federal land. For private land, the principal obstacle is cost. For public land, the obstacle is gaining access to grazing allotments (Harper, 2002).

Several of the initiatives are resolving this problem by using low quality land. For example in the Kaibab National Forest, the Forest Service would like to start a grassbank to help conduct fire restoration treatments. Currently, the Forest Service has a vacant allotment that could be used for this purpose, but the parcel has very little grass. Agency officials estimate that it will take 5 to 10 years to restore the empty allotment before it can be used as a grassbank. This allotment is also not ideal because it is isolated from the other allotments and thus will increase the transportation costs of the project (Padilla, 2001). With an

Invested Partner, though, this grassbank could already be operating on a better allotment. A permittee in the area was looking to sell his permit for an allotment with plenty of grass. The allotment was also in an advantageous location (Jones, 2001).

Other challenges faced by the grassbank initiatives include funding, politics, regulations, and administration. An Invested Partner could help secure funds from foundations and from the federal appropriations process. Many organizations are considering charging fees to help fund grassbank operations, but large cash outlays are still needed to acquire the land and complete the treatments. As was done in the Valle Grande Grass Bank, an Invested Partner could acquire land and grazing allotments. In addition, the Invested Partner could help secure the trust of ranchers and the environmental community. Leadership is needed to motivate communities and obtain active cooperation. Finally, the Invested Partner can help motivate agency officials to complete regulatory requirements such as Environmental Assessments (EAs) for NEPA (Harper, 2002).

Finally, many representatives from the grassbank initiatives expressed a need for administrative help in starting and running a grassbank. They need technical help with agreements, operational procedures, and logistics. An Invested Partner could help address some of these needs by providing staff to handle the details. However, a new organization, "Grassbank, Inc." could also provide this technical information. Grassbank, Inc. will potentially serve as an umbrella group for grassbanks and will provide information and assistance (Harper, 2002).

Beyond the grassbank movement, the Invested Partner concept has the potential to help federal agencies in a wide variety of management arenas. Besides land, non-profits could buy mineral leases, forest concessions, water rights, and fishing quotas. For example, a non-profit could buy a mineral lease to prevent mining in ecologically sensitive areas and to protect watersheds from sediment depositions in streams. Similarly, a non-profit could purchase fishing rights to prevent overharvest. In Canada, a recent court case limited the ability of government agencies to regulate fishing by First Nations tribes. A non-profit could buy these rights *from the tribes* to help prevent overfishing of salmon and other fish, to the mutual gain of environmentalists and tribes.

The purchase of water rights is an especially promising arena for Invested Partnerships. For instance, a non-profit could purchase water rights in the San Luis Valley,

Colorado to help maintain the Great Sand Dunes National Park. The existence of the dunes is dependent on a certain water table. As individuals and cities utilize their water rights, the water table drops. The loss of this water underneath the dunes could potentially destroy the dunes (Feldman, 1991). A non-profit could purchase these water rights thus helping the National Park Service.

Invested Partners could also help secure water for “in stream” uses (fishing, rafting, etc.) For example, a non-profit could purchase the water rights for the water flowing through the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Monument. Currently, environmental groups are trying to secure these rights through legal action; they would like the water rights to be transferred to the Park Service so the agency can maintain appropriate levels of water in the river (McAllister, 2001). This water would help restore the water ecosystem, helping it support aquatic life. Instead of pursuing legal action, non-profits could purchase these water rights and then donate them to the State of Colorado under the condition that water is allowed to run through the canyon. State governments are exempt from the “use it or lose it” provision. This may be the best opportunity for the Invested Partner concept; there is a clear need for assistance and markets for water rights are well developed.

Non-profits could also purchase timber concessions and help agencies remove small-diameter wood from the forest. Small trees have elevated the risk of catastrophic fire for forests across the West, not just in New Mexico. To help restore ecological health, these trees need to be removed and low-intensity fire regimes re-established. Currently, though, small diameter wood has very few markets. The principal markets require large, mature trees (Lankford, 2002). Non-profits could purchase the timber concessions and remove only the small trees. The operation could be funded in part by wood sales but subsidized by foundation grants.

Non-profits could also help land agencies solve the small tree problem by promoting local businesses. For example, the Jobs and Biodiversity Coalition (a non-profit organization in southwest New Mexico) has helped revive a local forest products industry that will be able to utilize small diameter wood. So far, it has helped form fuel pellet and wood fiber businesses. The formation of these businesses has required significant investments of time, human resources, and finances. Most significantly, JBC secured a \$750,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to fund the project. JBC wants to be a “jumpstart” organization for these

businesses, and hopes that the new businesses will eventually pay their own way (Brick, 2001).

These businesses will help the Forest Service restore the mature ponderosa pine stands on the Gila National Forest by creating markets for small-diameter wood. The local forests are plagued with dense thickets of young trees. Today, a fire in the area would destroy the entire ecosystem and the town of Silver City because there is so much fuel in the forest. Prior to the JBC project, the local Forest Service district was unable to put together small-diameter timber sales because there was no market for this wood; loggers were not willing to harvest it without a market (Brick, 2001).

Because of its direct financial investment and its operating role, JBC deserves to be called an Invested Partner in this project. Like The Conservation Fund, JBC has worked to ensure the project is a success. JBC is also working to build trust between environmentalists and the Forest Service to reduce the risk of litigation. To do so, JBC lobbied the most ardent environmentalists in the region, obtaining their support and active participation in the collaboration. To gain the environmentalists' support, JBC has used its influence as an Invested Partner to change the focus of local Forest Service officials from "getting the cut out" to improving forest health. JBC has advocated for the project within the agency. As a result, agency officials have renewed energy and are beginning timber projects that focus on forest restoration. JBC will continue to work to ensure that forest health remains a priority (Brick, 2001).

Potential applications of the Invested Partner concept will probably be site and problem specific. Land agencies face a variety of challenges, many of which might be alleviated through Invested Partnerships. In many situations, an Invested Partnership could be a powerful tool for helping agencies achieve management goals. Creativity is needed, though, to recognize the opportunities for purchases and partnerships.

VIII. Conclusions

The Invested Partner role is an effective strategy for helping land agencies overcome management challenges. For the Valle Grande Grass Bank program, The Conservation Fund's investments were critical to the initiation and success of the program. Beyond the initial investment, TCF has ensured the program's continued success through lobbying efforts, ongoing financial support, and facilitation. The initial investment motivates the non-profit to actively support the project beyond the start-up, making the Invested Partner a powerful role. In the end, the non-profit is rewarded with environmental protection and restoration as well as improved relations with government agencies and citizens. The non-profit receives a return to its mission.

The Invested Partner concept has the opportunity to help current grassbank initiatives become successful programs. Federal agencies are interested in starting grassbanks throughout the West to aid restoration efforts, however they are plagued by the same difficulties as the Forest Service in New Mexico. Invested Partnerships could help many of the initiatives become a reality. Beyond grassbanking, Invested Partnerships have the potential to help agencies overcome other challenges through the purchase of water rights, timber concessions, mineral rights, fishing quotas, etc. Non-profits are not limited by the same rules as federal agencies, and thus can purchase assets that the agencies cannot otherwise secure.

The Invested Partner role illustrates some of the exciting new opportunities of the current era of collaboration and partnership. This approach, like others emerging from the era of collaboration and partnership, helps solve the underlying challenges of land management. Real work is achieved on the ground now, instead of waiting for legal or institutional change. Given the rapid loss of biodiversity, this proactive approach to environmental activism might help prevent species loss. Traditional roles of non-profits are still important, though, to force change from the "top." New legislation and policy changes can help secure long-term change that will persist beyond the life cycle of specific projects and non-profits. The Invested Partner role complements policy change but does not replace it.

The Invested Partner concept is not infallible. There are two important caveats. First, as already mentioned, a program born through an Invested Partnership is usually dependent on the continued involvement of the Invested Partner. This dependency could lead to the demise of the program if the Invested Partner can no longer be involved. To prevent this threat, the non-profit should involve a back-up organization from the onset.

Second, Invested Partnerships might give undue influence to one interest group. The federal government is responsible for allocating land and resources as the *people* deem appropriate, not based on a local group or partnership (Coggins, 1998). In addition, federal agencies have to ensure that they are not giving preferential treatment to one partner over another (USDA, 1999). It is difficult to maintain both national perspective and local equity when the non-profit has invested considerable funds and time into a project that is designed to help the agency do its work. The non-profit and the agency should keep these concerns in mind when creating an Invested Partnership.

Both of these caveats can be mitigated by non-profits and federal land agencies during program design. Two other concerns, though, might not be as easily remedied. The non-profit sector does not have access to the same degree of funding as large timber or oil companies; the non-profit funding base is significantly smaller than corporations' assets. Non-profits need to be wary of the development of new markets that force them to compete with corporations for assets. For example, Marion Clawson suggested that conservation groups could lease "wilderness," instead of pushing for Congressional wilderness designation (Clawson, 1983). This is an attractive idea but it might establish wilderness as a private good, like timber or grazing, that is only provided in response to market demand. Non-profits would probably not be able to compete in this new market. Of course, though, many assets already have developed markets (land, water, etc.). In these cases, the Invested Partner role enables environmental non-profits to secure assets and capitalize environmental benefits.

Despite these concerns, the Invested Partner role is an effective strategy with significant potential. It is not a role that should replace traditional non-profit activity, but application of this concept opens new doors for non-profits to help agencies manage land and protect environmental interests.

IX. Appendices

A. List of Interviewees: Valle Grande Grass Bank

Bill deBuys, Director of Santa Fe Office, The Conservation Fund, August 14, 2001

Jerry Elson, The Conservation Fund, July 18, 2001

Bob Langsenkamp, The Conservation Fund, July 10, 2001

Dan Crittenden, Pecos District Ranger, Santa Fe National Forest, August 10

Leonard Atencio, Santa Fe National Forest Supervisor, July 12, 2001

Dave Stewart, Director of Range Management, Region 3, Forest Service, July 16, 2001

Anne Bartuska, Director of Forest and Rangeland Management, National Office, Forest Service, July 5, 2001.

Gerald Chacon, New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service, July 18, 2001

Palemon Martinez, Northern New Mexico Stockman's Association, August 15, 2001

Mark Schiller, La Jicarita News, June 27, 2001

Conversations also held with:

Pat Melendrez, New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service, June 1, 2001

Charlie Jakovich, Pecos District, Santa Fe National Forest, June 30, 2001

Courtney White, The Quivira Coalition, June 12, 2001; August 14, 2001

Will Barnes, The Conservation Fund, June 7, 2001

B. Interview Questions: Valle Grande Grass Bank

Interviewees were associates (current and former) of the Valle Grande Grass Bank. Due to varying interview times, interviewees were not asked every question. I focused each interview on the SWOT questions indicated by an *.

What role have you played in the startup or maintenance of the Valle Grande Grassbank?

Startup

From your perspective, what were some of the greatest challenges to starting the grassbank?

What obstacles were encountered?

Regulatory/Institutional?

Political?

Social? Local opposition/mistrust?

Opposing groups?

Was there community interest in the idea?

What could have been done differently?

What could have helped make the startup easier?

What were some of the benefits to the collaborative process? Drawbacks?

In your opinion, could it have worked without being a collaborative process?

Operations

Are you involved in the maintenance of the grassbank (everyday operations, monitoring, etc.)? Are you involved with the treatments on the allotments and/or the grassbank?

From your perspective, what are the principal challenges to maintaining the grassbank or doing the treatments?

Any operating issues?

Cash-flow?

Coordination?

What could be done differently? What could be improved?

Do you believe the grassbank is working? Succeeding at its goals?

What could help the program be more successful?

**Strengths*

What do you believe are the strengths of the grassbank?

What is working well?

**Weaknesses*

What do you think could be improved? Could be done differently? (Question asked above)

**Opportunities*

Do you think there is a need for more grassbanks in your area?

Do you see opportunities for similar grassbanks in the area?

Do you see any changes (in governmental policy, local politics, economic conditions, local perceptions, local demographics) that will help foster the creation of new grassbanks?

Do you see any changes (in governmental policy, local politics, economic conditions, local perceptions, local demographics) that will make it easier for ranchers to participate in grassbanks?

**Threats*

What obstacles do you currently face? (Question asked above)

How long do you plan on running the grassbank? Do you have any concerns for its longevity?

Do you see any changes (in governmental policy, local politics, economic conditions, local perceptions, local demographics) that will make it more difficult for ranchers to participate in grassbanks?

C. Interview Questions: New Grassbank Initiatives

Interviewees were participants of the November, 2000 conference entitled “Grassbanks in the West: Challenges and Opportunities.” I used different sections of these questions, depending on the status of the interviewee’s grassbank.

What was your reason for attending the conference?
Was the conference useful?

Are you currently involved in any grassbanking efforts? Or have you been involved in any grassbank efforts previously?
Could I talk to you now or set up a time to talk about your grassbanking experiences?

Do you know of any (other) grassbank initiatives? Or other people I should call?

Current Grassbank

Background --Where, What, When, Who

Where is it located?

How large is the ranch? Is all of it being used as a grassbank?

How long has it been in existence?

Who owns the ranch?

Who oversees the management of the ranch? Do you have a steering committee? Who is on the steering committee?

Who are the participants?

How many participating ranchers? How many cows?

Where are they from?

What is the projected length of their participation?

Mission

What are the goals of your grassbank? Mission?

What are your conservation goals?

What problems (ecological, economic, etc) are you trying to address with the grassbank?

Operations

How is your grassbank organized?

How many people are involved in running your grassbank?

Briefly, what do they do?

How are the cows managed while on the grassbank?

Intensive grazing? Electric fences?

How often do you rotate pastures?

Who manages them?

What happens on the participating ranches/allotments while the cows are at the grassbank?

Any treatments? Fire? Thinning?

Who does the treatments?

What happens when the cows go home?

What type of grazing management?

Any follow-up programs? Any training to teach new management practices?

Startup

How did your grassbank come into existence?

Was it a collaborative process?

What partnerships were formed? Who was involved?

Was there community interest in the grassbank?

Were any groups/parties opposed to the creation of the grassbank?

What obstacles did you encounter? What were the greatest challenges?

Regulatory or institutional roadblocks?

Political?

Social?

Funding?

Monitoring – Measuring Success

Do you have a monitoring program?

What are you monitoring for?

Are you monitoring on the grassbank? Are you monitoring the participating ranches/allotments?

Who is running your monitoring program?

How many staff?

Are volunteers used?

What had your monitoring shown? Any results yet?

How will you decide when you are successful? How are you measuring success?

How long do you plan on monitoring?

Costs and Funding

How much did your grassbank cost to get started?

What were the principal costs?

How much does the grassbank cost to run?

What are the principal costs?

How is your grassbank funded?

Startup funding?

Operations?

Monitoring?

How do you anticipate maintaining funding for operations and monitoring?

Strengths

What do you believe are the strengths of your grassbank?

What is working well?

Weaknesses

What do you think could be improved?

Opportunities

Do you see opportunities for other grassbanks in your area?

Do you have any plans to expand your current grassbank or to start other grassbanks?

What are some of your future projects?

Do you see any interesting trends that will help your grassbank and others?

Any changes in local perception/politics?

Any changes in government policy?

Any changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle changes, etc.?

Threats

What obstacles to you currently face?

Operating issues?

Funding issues? Cash-flow problems?

Political opposition?

How long do you plan on running the grassbank? Do you have any concerns on how to keep the grassbank running over the long-term?

Needs

What do you need to be more successful?

What would have helped you start the grassbank more easily?

Planning a Grassbank

How far along are you in the planning process?

When do you anticipate getting the grassbank started?

What conservation goals are you trying to address through the creation of a grassbank?

Ecological restoration? Land protection?

Are you using a collaborative planning process? Who is involved?

Anticipated Setup/Operations

Have you identified a ranch yet to use as the grassbank?

Where would the ranch be located?

How large? Are you planning on using the entire ranch as a grassbank?

Who will own the ranch?

Who will be the participants?

Where will they be from?

How many?

Who will oversee the management of the ranch?

Will you have a steering committee? Who will be on it?

Any thoughts on how the ranch will be managed?

Intensive grazing? Rotation schedule?

What do you plan to happen on the participating ranches/allotments while the cows are at the grassbank?

Any treatments? Fire? Thinnings?

Who will do these treatments?

Any management plans for when the cows go home?

Have you identified your staff needs yet? How many employees?

Do you plan to have a monitoring program? What will you be monitoring for?

Obstacles

Is there community interest in the grassbank?

Are there any groups/parties opposed to the grassbank?

Have you obtained funding?

For the land?

For operations? Monitoring?

How much do you anticipate it will cost to get started and to run?

What obstacles are you encountering?

Any regulatory or institutional roadblocks?

Political?

Social?

What would you need to overcome these obstacles? What do you need at this point to get your grassbank started? What would help you get it started?

Opportunities

Do you see opportunities for other grassbanks in your region?

Do you see any trends that helped foster your grassbanking efforts?

Changes in local perception/politics?

Changes in governmental policy?

Changes in social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle changes, etc.?

Interested in Starting a Grassbank

What niche do you foresee a grassbank filling in your area?

What conservation goals do you think a grassbank in your area could address?

Are there other groups/parties interested in helping start a grassbank in your area? Any potential partnerships? Are you actively seeking partnerships?

Is there community interest in a grassbank?

As far as you know are there any groups/parties opposed to a grassbank in your area?

Do you have any vision to how a grassbank might work in your area?

What would help you start a grassbank? What would you need?

Grassbank No Longer in Existence

What happened?

What challenges did you face?

Political?

Social?
Funding?
Operating Issues? Cash-Flow?
Regulatory/Institutional?
What could have helped you keep the grassbank going? What did you need?
What would you advise other organizations not to do? What should they avoid?

No Longer Looking at Starting

Why are you no longer interested? What challenges/obstacles did you face?
What would have helped you start a grassbank?
Do you think there is a niche for a grassbank in your community that could be filled by another group?

Don't Agree with Grassbank Concept

Why don't you agree?
Do you believe there are other solutions?
Do you oppose grazing on public lands in general?
Why do you oppose public land grazing?

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