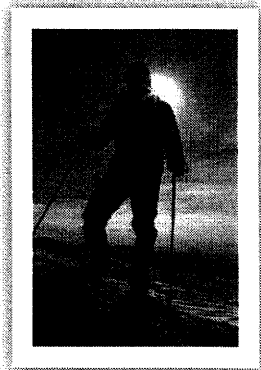


Quality of Life Attributes Spur Growth in High Amenity Communities

By Linda Kruger



Many communities located near high amenity public lands are growing rapidly (McGranahan 2005). The phenomenon behind the change is amenity migration—the relocation of people to areas rich in environmental and cultural resources and recreation opportunities (Johnson and Beale 2002, McCool and Kruger 2003; Green, Deller, and Marcouiller 2006). Migrants often visit an area as tourists and return as seasonal or intermittent visitors. Moving to these areas provides migrants with

easier access to wilderness, recreation opportunities and a higher quality of life. They become permanent residents when they retire, negotiate the ability to work remotely, relocate their businesses or start new ones. Some continue as intermittent visitors, splitting time among multiple residences.

Amenity migration is occurring across the United States; however some areas are receiving more pressure than others. Amenity migration is especially high in the mountains of the West and Southwest, coastal areas, near national forests, national parks, or other public land holdings (English, Marcouiller, and Cordell 2000). The rural countryside is an important destination for migrants with its easy access to nature, appealing landscapes, and cultural assets such as long-standing cultural beliefs, traditions and festivals (McGranahan 2005).

A glance through the colorful pages of in-flight airline magazines provides a who's who of amenity communities including Colorado Springs, Jackson Hole, Boise, Idaho Falls, the Medford-Ashland and Redmond-Bend areas, Missoula and Lake Tahoe, among others. Amenity migration differs from historic migration patterns in that quality of life values, including appealing landscapes and climate, are higher predictors of migration than economic measures (McGranahan 2005).

WRDC Information Briefs (see Selfa 2004; Kirschner 2004) have focused on population growth and change in the west but few studies of population change, even in the growing literature on amenity migration, have included communities in Alaska. In addition to describing amenity migration one of the goals here is to bring attention to amenity migration in Alaska.

Homer, a community located on the Kenai Peninsula south of Anchorage, is attracting growing numbers of retirees, seasonal, and part-time residents (Fried and Windisch-Cole 2004). With its dramatic scenery, mild climate, and abundant recreation opportunities, Homer is one of several communities attracting amenity migrants to the 49th state. In the last 10 years Homer has seen an increase in home buyers coming from outside the area and

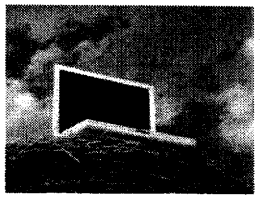
outside the state. As a result local residents have to move farther from town to find affordable housing (James 2006). Some in-migrants are retirees (in the last Census almost 18 percent of the Kenai Borough population was over 55 years old) and others are entrepreneurs who bring their work with them, reflected by the almost 19 percent of the labor force in the Homer area that is self-employed (Fried and Windisch-Cole 2004). One noticeable effect of the population influx is that the average sales price of a home went from \$119,000 in 1999 to \$190,000 in 2003—well beyond what many Homer residents can afford (James 2006).

Buyers from outside the state are also snapping up real estate in the capital city of Juneau and other communities in southeast Alaska. Scenic beauty, access to outdoor recreation, friendly people, and small town atmosphere are features important to Juneau's residents and newcomers alike. Ninety-four percent of those responding to a 2006 study listed quality of life as important or very important, with almost 20 percent mentioning it as the single most important reason to live in the community (McDowell 2006). Forty-two percent of business owners and managers said that the primary reason they located in Juneau is because they wanted to live in the community, with 21 percent saying there was no valid economic reason for doing so (supporting McGranahan's findings). McDowell also found that almost 20 percent of Juneau's residents are over 55 and 40 percent of Juneau's households include a retired person or someone who will retire in the next five years. Learning how many of these retirees have moved to the community in the past five years will help identify the extent to which Juneau is attracting amenity migrants.

Situated within the 17 million acre Tongass National Forest, Juneau shares many features with other high amenity communities—proximate location to public lands, a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities, scenic beauty, and a changing population. From 1995–2000 new residents made up 22 percent of Juneau's population (McDowell 2006). Several of the smaller communities in the region are also experiencing growth in sale of homes to buyers from outside the state who become seasonal residents.

Seven factors contribute to amenity migration. First, rising levels of disposable income among the middle and skilled working classes and the growth of a "leisure society" with time for recreation and travel have fueled demand for recreation (Whitson 2001, 2005). Second, baby boomers begin to turn 60 in 2006 and 65 in 2011—retirement age for many. From 2010 to 2030 the populations over 65 will spike by 75 percent to over 69 million people (Hodge

Amenity migration is especially high in the mountains of the West and Southwest, coastal areas, near national forests, national parks, or other public land holdings.



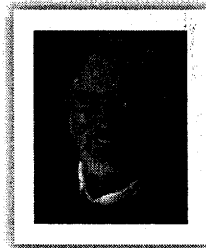
Western Rural Development Center

RURAL CONNECTIONS

Connecting 13 Western States and 4 U.S. Territories

FALL 2006
VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

Director's Message



As the 21st Century unfolds before us we are faced with the issue of what the economic structure of rural places in the West will be and what role public lands may hold in that new economy.

Rural Development in the Western United States is often tightly linked to public lands and the natural resources associated with them. Resource extraction has played an important role in providing economic opportunities, and agriculture, especially cattle and sheep ranching, has also drawn upon these publicly held resources to support the western economy. As the 21st Century unfolds before us we are faced with the issue of what the economic structure of rural places in the West will be and what role public lands may hold in that new economy.

Not only are the issues of how to protect and utilize public lands for the private and public good facing Westerners but in many parts of the region so is the growing issue of preserving farm and ranch land. Arguments have been made that public lands should be privatized to enhance local economies while others have argued that public lands meet the needs of the public by being publicly held and managed.

In this issue of *Rural Connections* you will find several articles discussing these issues. Dr. Linda Kruger with the US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station in Juneau, Alaska, provides insight into how quality of life attributes are spurring population and economic growth in high-amenity communities. She does a superb job of pointing out that high-amenity public lands provide quality of life attributes that are drawing retirees, and seasonal and part-time residents. While this migration pattern is positive for many rural communities, the down side is that as housing costs soar and service jobs become predominant many local

residents are having to move farther and farther from the core cities such as Homer, Alaska. These communities that have historically been geographically isolated and focused on resource extraction activities to maintain the local economy are now facing stressors as their population changes and their economy shifts to increased amenity-driven development.

Another article focuses on agricultural land preservation. This article highlights why the public supports and values agricultural land preservation beyond its ability to produce food, fiber and timber. Several of these public values include the notion that agricultural land curbs the negative impacts of ill-managed growth, provides flood control and provides community buffers or greenways improving overall quality of life. The article goes on to identify tools that local leaders have used to preserve agricultural lands.

Rural development has many faces in the West and opportunities exist for a vibrant economy and a viable environment supporting a high quality of life. Yet, how we manage our collective resources to provide for a sustainable future will be a key to what resources are retained for future opportunities.

The WRDC is focused on how we can provide research, education and platforms for public dialogue that will enable Western citizens to create a future that includes a high quality of life, physical and environmental amenities and a viable economy.

IN THIS ISSUE...

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

QUALITY OF LIFE
ATTRIBUTES SPUR
GROWTH

AG LAND PRESERVATION

NORTHWEST AREA
FOUNDATION STUDY
REVEALS AMERICANS
REALISTIC & OPTIMISTIC

COMMUNITY UPDATE:
FRESNO, CA

WRDC TRAININGS
DRAW 100+ FROM
ACROSS THE REGION

IN MEMORIAM: WRDC
HONORS TED K.
BRADSHAW

RURAL RESOURCES AND
FUNDING
OPPORTUNITIES

PUBLICATIONS

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
REGIONAL & NATIONAL
ACTIVITIES

2005). Third, this population spike is coupled with the largest intergenerational transfer of wealth in history—a transfer that will see more than 10 trillion dollars passed down from elderly parents to boomers (Hodge 2005). Baby boomers with money could double the demand for recreational homes and resort lodging in communities that serve as gateways to public lands (Howe, McMahon and Propst (1997). Fourth, many rural communities have shifted from manufacturing to retail- and service-based economies. In the West, the change is often from resource extraction (timber and mining) to tourism and recreation (Whitson 2005). Fifth, outdoor and adventure travel are the fastest growing segments of the travel industry in the United States (Howe, McMahon and Propst 1997). Tourists and retirees are attracted to recreation-based communities by their natural amenities and opportunities for tranquility and adventure (English, Marcouiller and Cordell 2000; Johnson and Beale 2002) and increases in each segment increased the need for services. Sixth, there has been a shift in attitudes with a higher valuing of the natural environment, cultural differentiation, leisure, learning and spirituality (Price, Moss, and Williams 1997). Finally, increased access provided by improved communication and transportation systems is helping to fuel this trend, particularly as it supports the relocation of entrepreneurs.

Community and environmental effects

Some of the effects of migration are quite obvious. First, with a large segment of the population nearing retirement age, the location of recreation amenities will play an increasing role in migration patterns. Second, this demand has created opportunities for landowners to make even more money by developing recreational property, resulting in population and landscape change (Whitson 2001). One aspect of the change is that disparities between those with sizable inheritances or money from property sales and those without will limit choices for the less fortunate—especially women and minorities (Hodge 2005). In addition those who have been living in the areas targeted by amenity migrants may suffer disproportionately as housing and other costs rise. Renters and those on fixed incomes such as those depending on social security and small pensions may be at highest risk. As communities adjacent to public lands become more dependent on the amenity values of those lands, resource management agencies are faced with a new paradigm for promoting community resilience that involves recreation, tourism and sustaining resource values.

There are also environmental concerns associated with this trend. Ocean front, lakes and rivers are often a primary attraction for amenity migrants. The coastal and riparian ecosystems



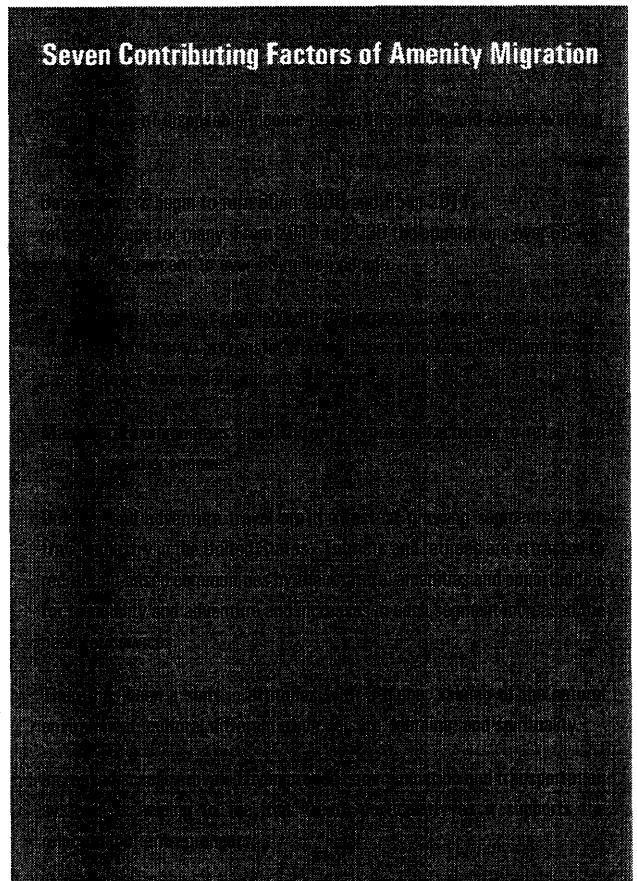
surrounding these areas can be fragile, ecologically sensitive and easily altered by amenity-residence development. Rapid, often unmanaged growth can lead to sprawl, uncontrolled subdivisions, encroachment into previously natural areas and loss of open space and wildlife habitat (Howe, McMahon, and Propst 1997).

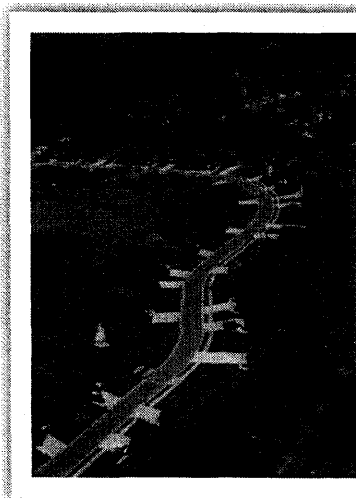
Community response

Amenity growth communities will want to plan for transportation, land-use, and public services to assure that those most at risk also have opportunities to live and work in the community. Development associated with amenity migration often results in higher local property values, higher tax assessments, and a fear that local property taxes will be increased even more to meet infrastructure needs for the new migrants. Affordable housing is a concern in many amenity migration communities.

The pace of growth is one factor that contributes to community vulnerability in the face of amenity-based migration. Communities,

Seven Contributing Factors of Amenity Migration





especially less populated rural communities, can have a difficult time keeping up with expanding infrastructure needs. Municipal planners may look forward to higher tax streams from high-value developments, but may be unprepared when costs exceed, or collection does not meet, expectations.

Unincorporated areas, outside the town's official boundaries, often experience some

of the heaviest development. These areas have minimal zoning regulations and fewer development restrictions than incorporated areas (McGranahan 2005). Spatially, the new development may occur far away from existing infrastructure such as water, sewer, and electricity. Per capita, the costs to cover development of public infrastructure (roads, sewer, electric) at this distance are much higher. Many communities are not prepared to shoulder sharp rises in municipal services costs, nor are they equipped to handle processing permits for development. Networking among civic planners might provide access to information exchange and provide needed foresight to planning challenges.

Communities faced with amenity growth are best served if they tailor their strategies to their particular circumstances. Howe, Probst and McMahon (1997:141-144) identified the following common strategies:

- All interests are represented in public participation processes.

- Participation encompasses active involvement in planning and implementation.
- The best available information is used in decision-making.
- Local initiatives focus on distinctive features important to the economic future of the community.
- Reliance on regulations is balanced with innovative and inclusive approaches. Such approaches might include award and incentive programs, low-interest loans and tax incentives.
- Public education is an important ingredient common to successful programs.

Successful communities have found innovative ways to work with developers to achieve acceptable developments that support livable communities. Communities in high amenity areas can explore new income and employment opportunities that build on their amenity resources and the opportunities to attract amenity migrants (if desired). Thoughtful consideration and deliberation on the types of businesses and development appropriate for the community is critical. Community incentives can be designed to encourage local entrepreneurs. Attractions such as festivals and special events to extend the tourism into the shoulder and off seasons may be an option. Developing facilities that serve both tourist and resident needs maximizes the community's investment and makes the community more attractive for residents and visitors alike. Learning what has worked in other places can help a community expand its possibilities and can open the door to partnerships and working arrangements that benefit multiple parties.

Communities interested in attracting amenity migrants can begin assessing their desirability by conducting an inventory of the attributes that would attract amenity migrants. If amenities are present, additional analysis might explore the adequacy of access to metropolitan areas, transportation systems, communications, health care and other services that would support growth. Community conversations around the implications of marketing the community to potential amenity migrants are equally important. In high amenity locations, communities may be surprised at the number of amenity migrants already in residence.

Summary

A variety of factors have merged to contribute to rapid growth in communities with high amenity values. Migration and rapid growth can complicate the social, economic and environmental challenges communities already face. With proactive planning, new migrants can contribute to improved community capacity, stimulate the economy and result in increasing amenities that benefit all residents. Without adequate planning, affordable housing and infrastructure communities may not be able to keep up with demand.

About the author

Linda Kruger is a social science team leader with the US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station in Juneau, Alaska.

Community Strategies for Coping with Amenity Growth

- All interests are represented in public participation processes.
- Participation encompasses active involvement in planning and implementation.
- The best available information is used in decision-making.
- Local initiatives focus on distinctive features important to the economic future of the community.
- Reliance on regulations is balanced with innovative and inclusive approaches. Such approaches might include award and incentive programs, low-interest loans and tax incentives.
- Public education is an important ingredient common to successful programs.

Endnotes

English, D.B.K., D.W. Marcouiller and H.K. Cordell. 2000. Tourism dependence in rural America: estimates and effects. *Society and Natural Resources* 13:185-202.

Fried, N. & B. Windisch-Cole. 2004. The Kenai Peninsula. *Alaska Economic Trends* (November): 4-16.

Green, G.P., S.C. Deller, and D.W. Marcouiller, eds. 2006. *Amenities and rural development: Theory, methods, and public policy*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elger Publishing, Inc.

Hodge, P. 2005. Living younger longer: baby boomer challenges. Statement of Paul Hodge to the 2005 White House Conference on Aging Policy Hearing Committee. www.genpolicy.com/articles/2005 accessed July 19, 2005.

Howe, J., E. McMahon, and L. Propst. 1997. *Balancing nature and commerce in gateway communities*. Covelo, CA: Island Press.

James, C. 2006. Retirees keep Homer home prices moving. *Daily Sitka Sentinel*, August 2, 2006, p.7.

Johnson, K.M. and C.L. Beale. 2002. Nonmetro recreation counties: their identification and rapid growth. *Rural America* 17 (4) 12-19.

Kirschner, A. 2004. The aging of the west. *Western Rural Development Center Information Brief* (2) 1-7. <http://extension.usu.edu/WRDC/cfotrw.cfm>. Accessed 6/28/2005.

McCool, S.F. and L.E. Kruger. 2003. Human migration and natural resources: implications for land managers and challenges for researchers. Gen. Tech. Rep. PNW-GTR-580. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station. 19 p.

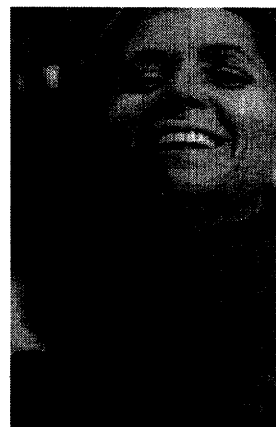
McDowell Group Inc. 2006. Juneau Economic Development Benchmark Survey Report 2006. www.jedc.org/forms/JEDCEconomicSurvey2006.pdf. Accessed 7/29/2006.

McGranahan, D.A. 2005. Returning to our roots? County net migration in the non-metropolitan U.S., 1990-2000. Paper presented at the 11th International Symposium on society and Resource Management, Ostersund, Sweden, June 16-19.

Price, M.F., L.A.G. Moss and P.W. Williams. 1997. Tourism and amenity migration. In Messerli, B.; Ives, J.D., eds. *Mountains of the world: a global priority*. London: Parthenon Publishing Group: 249-280.

Selfa, T.L. 2004. Shifting populations in the new west. *Western Rural Development Center Information Brief* (2) 1-8. <http://extension.usu.edu/WRDC/cfotrw.cfm> Accessed 6/28/2005.

Whitson, D. 2005. Recreation and gentrification in rural Alberta and British Columbia. Paper presented at the Small Cities Forum, Kamloops, BC Canada, May 6, 2005.



Western U.S. Land Use See what your state's leadership is doing to address land use

Alaska: <http://www.state.ak.us/>

Arizona: <http://azagvnewsbop.portal/>

California: http://www.ca.gov/state/parta/mayca_homepage.jsp

Colorado: <http://www.colorado.gov/>

Hawaii: <http://www.hawaii.gov/portal/>

Idaho: <http://www.state.id.us/>

Montana: <http://mt.gov/>

Nevada: <http://www.nv.gov/>

New Mexico: <http://www.newmexico.gov/>

Oregon: <http://www.oregon.gov/>

Utah: <http://www.utah.gov/>

Washington: <http://access.wa.gov/>

Wyoming: <http://wyo.state.gov/>

American Samoa: <http://www.asg.gov.net/>

Guam: <http://www.guam.gov/guadmin.htm>

Micronesia-Kolonia: <http://www.fsmgov.org/>

Northern Mariana: <http://www.pna.gov/>



The Western Rural Development Center compiles this newsletter with submissions from university faculty, researchers, agencies and organizations from throughout the Western region. We make every attempt to provide valuable and informative items of interest to our stakeholders.

The views and opinions expressed by these agencies/organizations are not necessarily those of the WRDC. The WRDC is not responsible for the content of these submitted materials or their respective websites and their inclusion in the newsletter does not imply WRDC endorsement of that agency/organization/program.

The Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) is one of four regional centers in the U.S. funded by the USDA/CSREES to strengthen the capacity of local citizens to guide the future of their rural communities. Each center links the research and extension capacity of the land grant universities with local decision makers to address a wide range of rural development issues.

The WRDC also receives substantial support from Utah State University through Cooperative Extension; the Agricultural Experiment Station; the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences and the College of Natural Resources.

The WRDC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability or veteran status.

Visit our website today for details on emerging issues, regional resources, upcoming training workshops and conferences.



This material is based upon work supported by annual base funding through the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

