

Community Character of the *Okanogan Human Resource Unit*

The Spokane Field Office contracted James Kent Associates (JKA) to collect information on communities in the planning area. They collected information within Human Resource Units (HRU) which are roughly equivalent in size to a county but seldom correspond to county boundaries. HRU boundaries are derived by JKA from seven cultural descriptors and by self-reporting of residents living in these areas. The Cultural Descriptors are Settlement Patterns, Publics, Networks, Support Services, Work Routines, Recreation Activities and Natural and Human caused Features of the Landscape. This document presents a synopsis of the information collected by JKA for the *Okanogan HRU*. **More detail can be found at the RMP website where the full JKA report is posted.**

Okanogan country has been a north/south corridor for hundreds of years. For example, for many years in the late 1800s, long cattle drives were conducted between Washington State and British Columbia to serve the economies of both areas. Moreover, residents confirmed the customary and routine contact across the border. The traditional culture in Okanogan has been ranching, mining, and timber. This culture is in decline. Omak lost its mill, for example. Only 9% of the county work force is now involved in forestry and agriculture while over 70% are involved in professional, service or sales occupations. The recreation economy is growing. The Methow River Valley is becoming well-known and well developed in recreation amenities that serve the Seattle metropolitan area. There are a number of seasonal resorts along the lakes and other places. Agri-tourism has developed as a means to combine traditional agricultural lifestyles with a visitor economy in order to enhance both.

What local people call a “hippy” subculture has also been present for decades and it has evolved into a “new age” community promoting recreation and conservation. Tonasket, for example, seems to be a vibrant community that actively mixes all these elements with some success, whereas in Oroville, there is some, but much less, evidence of the newer culture.

Community Concerns related to BLM

Citizens expressed a **low Awareness of BLM**; the location of BLM was often uncertain and they expressed a desire for maps. Others noted concern with **grazing management** relative to rising costs, decreased availability of forage, and grazing’s value to the area. JKA noted concern for **recreation** related to motorized uses, trails, and user fees. In general a desire for less **wilderness** was stated given current high amount in the county. **Fragmented BLM lands** were a concern and people suggested land tenure adjustment for consolidation. Specific areas mentioned were **Chadwick Hill** where trails and better access was requested. In addition, on **Palmer Mountain** concern with minerals claims and access for hunting and traditional and historic uses was expressed. Others suggested **management by geographic area** and wanted **coordination of management across agencies**. Citizens also noted concern with **Mining permits, Road Maintenance, Access to BLM, Rights of Way, Fire Management, Weed management, Law enforcement**.

Are there other concerns related to BLM in your area?