AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Lauren S. McCaskill for the degree of Master of Science in Forest Ecosystems and Society presented on September 19, 2023.

Title: Equity in Community Forestry in the Western US

Abstract approved: _____

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Community forestry is a decentralized form of forest governance that is widely promoted around the world. In the United States, community forestry is growing as a form of forest management, and exists across a range of ownership and governance models, all with different levels of community participation and access to benefits. While a key tenet of community forestry is to bring decision-making and benefits closer to the community, not everyone in a community has the same access. This research examines how management of community forestry in the western US addresses concerns of equity in access to decision making and benefits from forest management. In pursuit of this goal, I describe two case studies of community forestry in the western US owned by community-based organizations. I conducted semi-structured interviews with community forest managers, local leaders, community members, and other stakeholders. An equity framework, describing procedural, distributional, recognitional, and contextual dimensions of equity was used in the formation of interview questions and analysis of interviews. Analysis shows that there are a variety of ways for community forest management to contribute to equity based upon either formal or informal processes for determining community needs. Additionally, there are differences in how equity presents itself across dimensions in each case study. The intent of this study is to contribute to the discussion of how community forests can be structured more equitably.

Equity in Community Forestry in the Western US

by
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A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Master of Science

Presented September 19, 2023
Commencement June 2024

Master of Science thesis of <u>Lauren S. McCaskill</u> presented on <u>September 19, 2023</u>

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF APPENDICES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Community Forestry Context

Community forestry (CF) is a form of decentralized forest governance where some amount of control over forest management is transferred away from central governing entities and towards smaller scale governing bodies, including local governments and communities (Andersson & Ostrom, 2008). In this way, CF exists as a form of forest management that redistributes power over forest resources closer to those most impacted by the use of those forest resources (Hajjar & Molnar, 2016). Over the past 40 years, CF has been increasingly promoted worldwide and is widely viewed as a forest management solution with potential to address ecological concerns while also improving the livelihoods of local communities (Hajjar et al., 2021). CF has been viewed as a way to bring communities out of poverty by allowing them access to resources within local forests (Hajjar et al., 2021; McDermott & Schreckenberg, 2009), helping rural communities to diversify their economies (Hayter, 2007). Proponents of CF believe that local communities have the potential to be better stewards of the forests they use to support their livelihoods, as opposed to larger centralized entities (Andersson & Ostrom, 2008). It allows local communities more say in their forests while also enhancing forest resources (Ostrom, 1999) by taking on some level of responsibility for the maintenance of forest (Charnley & Poe, 2007). For these reasons, CF gained popularity, and became an important topic for international development agendas (Williamson et al., 2021; Charnley & Poe, 2007). In this context, the term "local communities" is meant to describe the communities surrounding and using the forest and its resources, though it is important to note that not everyone in a surrounding community always receives equal access to the community forest (Nagendra & Ostrom, 2012; McDermott & Schreckenberg, 2009), and communities are not always determined by place (Lawrence et al., 2021).

While much literature has focused on CF in low- and middle-income countries, community forests have also been established throughout the United States (Baker & Kusel, 2003). Supporters believe that US CF promises "genuine responsiveness to local priorities, flexibility in managing for multiple goals, and a melding of environmental and livelihood concerns" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 89). There are a wide variety of ways CF have been implemented in the US, which is evident in the diversity of use, ownership, and governance structures (Christofferson et al., 2008; McGinley et al., 2022), most of which involve a shift from top-down, centralized management, towards increased community participation (Davis et al., 2020). Despite the variety in US CF models, as Davis et al. point out, studies of community forestry— particularly those that focus on community of place as a unit of analysis—are few and far between.

Scholars across disciplines have long stressed the importance and need to include equity in sustainability objectives (See Agyeman & Evans, 2003; McDermott, 2009; McDermott & Schreckenberg, 2009; Walker, 2012; Pascual et al., 2014; Leach et al., 2018), and as McDermott (2009) demonstrates, equity is an important aspect of CF sustainability. Concepts of equity have been widely present in global discussions of CF for some time, however, there is a notable lack of literature focused on equity in US CF (Davis et al., 2020). Ideally, the diversity of community members who live around a CF should have equitable opportunities to influence management and decision-making processes and derive benefits.

In this study, we seek to examine whether and how community forests promote equity in two case studies in the Western US. Our research question is: How are equity considerations manifested in community forest management in relation to access to decision making spaces and benefits from community forest management in the western US? The following sections discuss the existing literature on CF within the US, as well as the literature on equity and the equity framework adapted for this study. It then outlines the rest of this thesis.

1.2 Community forestry in the United States

Land ownership in the US comprises a variety of public, private, and Tribal models, and while the Eastern US is dominated by private ownership, the Western US accounts for the majority of publicly owned forest land, and approximately two percent of forest land falls under Tribal ownership (Butler, 2019). Community forests exist under all three ownership types—for example, they have "been established on local, state, and federal government lands held in trust for and managed by or for local communities; forests owned by local land trusts and other community-based organizations that are managed with broad community input and involvement in forest planning, uses, and benefits; and forests owned outright by Tribes or private firms comprised of local community members and designated for their direct benefit with additional benefits for their neighbors and for society at large" (McGinley et al., 2022, p. 17). All models allow varying levels of community responsibility and access rights. Public models are typically found to support "community members' rights of local access, participation in decision-making, and shared benefits, particularly through participation and collaboration with the local conservation district," though local government owned community forests may allow more access to participation and benefits (McGinley et al., 2022, p. 12). Private ownership models are more varied than their public counterparts. For-profit community forest firms are relatively rare in the US, and provide limited opportunity for public involvement in decision-making and benefits outside of shareholders. Non-profit community forest ownership models (land trusts and other community-based organizations) "offer local community members a fairly broad range of opportunities to provide input and engage in forest planning and decision-making," as well as ways of benefiting, though they typically have fewer rights and responsibilities (McGinley et al., 2022, p. 19). Tribal ownership models are designed to meet the needs of the Tribe, and typically allow community members many ways to participate and benefit from community forest management.

According to McGinley et al. (2022), the number of community forests in the US has grown in recent years as federal, state, and private programs have been developed to help communities acquire and manage forestland. Across the country, many of these communities have recognized the opportunity to benefit from increased involvement in forest management and have responded by establishing new community forests (McGinley et al., 2022).

The main tenets of community forestry hold that "(a) some degree of responsibility and authority for forest management is formally vested by the government in local communities; (b) a central objective of forest management is to provide local communities with social and economic benefits from forests; and (c) ecologically sustainable forest use is a central management goal, with forest communities taking some responsibility for maintaining and restoring forest health" (Charnley & Poe, 2007, p. 303). These tenets are not entirely different from the often discussed 'triangle of sustainability,' and its three components: ecological, economic, and social (See Purvis et al., 2019). Recent CF literature agrees with the importance of this three-pronged approach to success but stresses the importance of including equity in the 'social' (McDermott, 2009; Christoffersen et al., 2008). In fact, while all three are important for maintaining a healthy community forest, McDermott argues that social equity needs to be given explicit attention if sustainability is to be achieved holistically. In their work, Christoffersen et al. (2008) also stress the importance of equity, stating: "At its core, [community-based forestry] advocates for inclusion of diverse interests and the empowerment of all constituents," and that CF must engage marginalized groups in order to be successful (Christoffersen et al., 2008, p. 21). The emphasis on social equity is found elsewhere in community forestry literature, such as Danks (2009), who argues that internal inequities within a community can impede broader community involvement in a community forest. While equity is not explicitly mentioned in many US community forest initiatives, many appear to share common values, including equity in the distribution of and access to benefits, as well as inclusive participatory decision-making spaces

(Christoffersen et al., 2008). Though there is a distinct lack of literature on equity in the U.S., is clear that equity is an important component.

Though equity is a subject more widely discussed in the international literature on CF (Davis et al., 2020), Hajjar et al. (2021) illustrate through their meta-analysis that few studies actually delve into equity outcomes. Typically, research indicates that in low and middle-income countries, community forestry is linked with a process of decentralization, which grants more power to local government and representatives of local agencies; however, disadvantaged and marginalized groups within these community forests might not experience the same advantages as others in the community (McDermott & Schreckenberg, 2009, p. 161). In some cases, community forest policies have actually increased state control over forest management and forest communities; for example, in the western highlands of Guatemala state community forest programs have centralized power away from local management practices (Charnley & Poe, 2007). Overall, CFs contributions to equity seem to be mixed (Charnley & Poe, 2007). For example, in Nepal some community forest programs exacerbated economic inequalities by restricting access to low-income and marginalized groups, while others increased the participation of those groups in community forest management (Rosen, 2020). A study of cases in Myanmar demonstrated that community members were generally provided with opportunities for participation, but that the most vulnerable individuals within the community were less likely to participate or gain the benefits (Yamauchi & Makoto, 2012). When making a comparison between CF in the US and the global CF literature, it is crucial to keep in mind that although similar equity concerns might arise at a broad level, these concerns often originate from distinct contextual obstacles.

1.3 Equity as an analytical framework

Pinning down an exact definition for equity and its many components can be a challenge. In the literature, 'equity' is often used interchangeably with terms like 'justice,'

'equality,' and 'fairness,' and while some of these terms overlap more than others, there are important distinctions (Klinsky & Dowlatabadi, 2009). Equality, while sometimes used synonymously with equity, largely refers to providing equal opportunities and equal treatment (Minow, 2021). In some cases, equity can mean equal treatment, but in other cases, it can mean treatment—or allocation of "shares"—is determined by need or other circumstance (Espinoza, 2007). While notions of justice are clearly linked to equity, justice can exist independently of equity, "before any process of judgement or interpersonal comparison has begun," while 'fairness' pertains to perceptions of the judgment process, and the correct application of the rules surrounding judgment (Grasso, 2007, p. 225). While justice is often metaphorically blindfolded from recognizing a situation in its entirety, equity removes the blindfold and looks at the situation holistically, and in this way, equity is a part of achieving justice (McDermott et al., 2013). In relation to justice, equity "refers to the normative criteria used to orient the implementation of principles/theories of justice" (Grasso, 2007, p. 225). In their discussion of justice as it pertains to defining equity, McDermott et al. (2013) note the significant role justice literature has played in relation to equity, and although justice scholarship has been important in defining equity, the latter is a better suited term for "evaluating change in the relative situation of particular groups in society" (p. 417).

In practice, when discussing equity, the term often "refers more fully to fairness and justice, acknowledging that these have both material dimensions – fairness in means and capabilities for a worthwhile life–and moral ones–treating or representing someone or something with due fairness, respect or appreciation" (Leach et al., 2018, p. 3). For the purposes of this study, we use the definition posed by Leach et al. (2018), that "equity refers to ensuring that everyone has what they need for wellbeing in a given context, implying 'more for those who need it'" (p. 3). Broadly speaking, acting equitably could mean that the poorest in a society would receive more benefits in an attempt to close the gap between the poor and the

rich, and requires a focus on governance "that will gradually lead to decision making that responds more directly to the needs of marginalized groups" (Essougong et al., 2019, p. 2).

Principles of equity have gained recognition as essential in discussions of sustainability, and is a part of the triangle of sustainability, which includes economic growth and environmental protection (Pascual et al., 2014). In their work, Pascual et al. identify links between social equity and desirable ecological outcomes, while Spies et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of including marginalized groups in management activities, which can have positive impacts on community well-being and conservation efforts. In addressing issues of sustainability, Agyeman and Evans (2003) argue that the US needs to take equity more seriously.

McDermott (2009) proposes an alternative to the way social, ecological, and economic components of community forestry have been conceptualized. McDermott suggests looking at this triad of sustainability as if it is a house; proposing the foundation of the house as the social piece (of which equity is the key component), which includes expanded access to decision-making spaces and access to resources. The rest of the house—ecological protection and economic growth—are built on top of this foundation. McDermott demonstrates that without addressing and actively striving for equity (i.e. laying the social foundation of the house), it will not be present in ecological or economic components. Once equity is addressed and given structural support, a community can begin to work towards ecological protection and economic growth, and have a much better chance of incorporating equity successfully into these components. In recent years, community-based forest management scholars have proposed an equity framework that addresses four types of equity: procedural, distributive, recognitional, and contextual (McDermott et al., 2013; Pascual et al., 2014; Hayes & Murtinho, 2018 – see Figure 1.1).
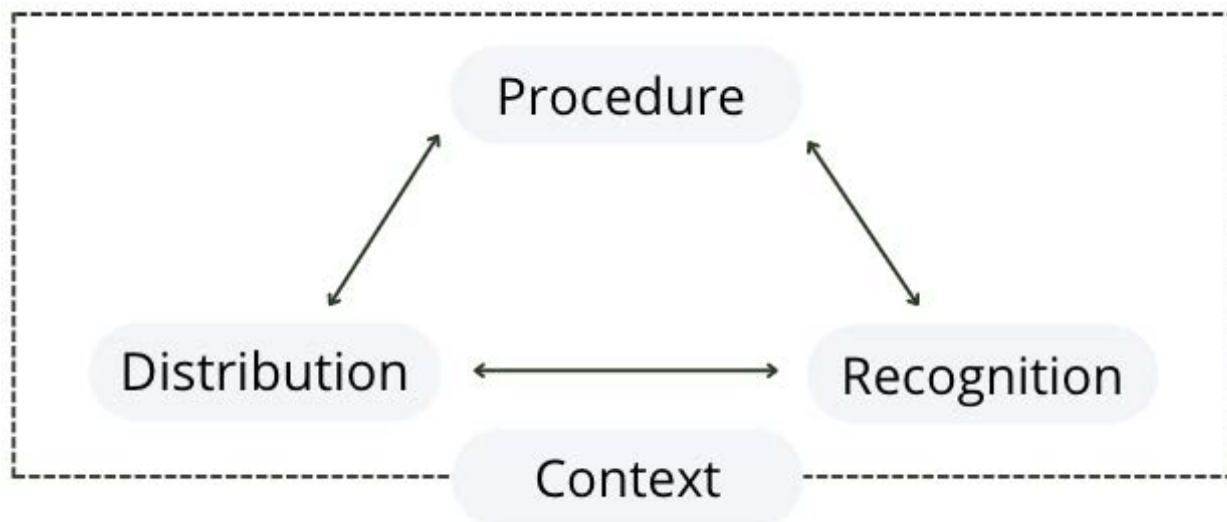
Figure 1.1. The equity framework. The four dimensions of social equity: (1) Procedure: the degree of inclusiveness in the decision-making process around forest management, (2) Distribution: the distribution of costs, risks, and benefits derived from land management, (3) Recognition: the respect for and acknowledgment of knowledge systems, values, and social norms, (4) Context: the surrounding conditions that limit community members' ability to engage in all other equity dimensions. This graphic demonstrates the interconnectedness of all four dimensions, which are tightly linked, and all play an important role in shaping the others. These dimensions are based on the work of McDermott et al. 2013, Pascual et al. 2014, and Hays & Murtinho 2018.

1.3.1 Procedural equity

Procedural equity addresses public participation, and who is included in the community forest decision making process (McDermott et al., 2013; Pascual et al., 2014; Hayes & Murtinho, 2018). This dimension of equity requires that all parties are recognized, and that affirmative action is taken to ensure the inclusion of marginalized groups in decision making processes (McDermott et al., 2013). Ideally, the decision-making process will incorporate the needs of marginalized groups within the community.

Carr and Halvorsen (2001) stress the importance of participatory democracy in CF initiatives, and the need for all members of a community to be represented within this democratic process. community forests are meant to benefit all groups within a community, and

when sections of a community are left out of participatory processes, it can unfavorably affect equity, as well as the institutional efficiency (Agarwal, 2001). Communities hold valuable knowledge of local ecosystems, and when involved in management processes, can help bolster stewardship efforts—however, all too often marginalized groups within a community are left out (Ballard et al., 2008). In fact, the United Nations codified the importance of public participation in Principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration, stating the necessity that all individuals within a community have access to information and access to public participation. These rights are viewed as being essential to environmental governance, and enforce the understanding that all people have the right to a clean and healthy environment, and should be allowed to participate in the creation of these spaces (Mitchell & Walker, 2007).

In their work, Arnstein (1969) discusses the spectrum or "ladder of participation," which ranges from nonparticipation (where relatively powerful groups manipulate those with less power) to varying degrees of participatory power (where community members have delegated power or control in decision-making processes). Agarwal (2001) also distinguishes between levels and forms of participation, from nominal participation (membership within the group), to interactive—or empowering—participation, which includes "having voice and influence in the group's decisions" (p. 1624). Similarly, Agrawal (2001) describes a range of participation within communities which ranges from nominal participation, where members of the community are uninvolved in the decision-making process, to active and interactive participation, where community members fully participate.

Power relations between community actors are greatly influenced by characteristics such as gender, class, and ethnicity, and groups that are the most marginalized often have limited decision-making power over the management of ecosystems and resources (Gonsalves, 2005). McDermott et al. (2013) names these groups as people "who have been marginalized with respect to natural resources, such as women, the landless, and ethnic minorities" (p. 420). This definition is similar to that of Danks (2009), who defines marginalized groups as people

who "live in or near poverty or who are marginalized in the US due to race, class, gender, or disability" (p. 172). This is meant to capture the communities that the USDA Forest Service classifies as 'underserved.' More recently, an executive order from president Biden defines underserved communities as "Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality," and who have been excluded from fully participating in social, economic, and civic life (White House, 2021, Sec 2. Definitions). Power must be intentionally redistributed to these groups to foster valuable participation (Arnstein, 1969).

1.3.2 Distributive equity

Distributive equity looks at the distribution of costs, risks, and benefits, and how they are distributed based on principles of equality, social welfare, merit, or need (McDermott et al., 2013). This component of equity also encompasses tenure and resource rights (Essougong, 2019), and the distribution of services (Lindsey et al., 2001). Schlosberg (2007) argues that for many decades, justice scholarship had been defined by the work of John Rawls, and focused heavily on distributional equity. Similarly, Mahanty et al. (2006) state that the distribution of socioeconomic benefits among stakeholders is the most commonly discussed measure of equity in community-based natural resource literature, though costs are less often discussed. Theories of distributive justice (and thus, equity) can be categorized as consequence-based and rules-based (McDermott et al., 2013). Historically, rules-based approaches saw distribution based on contribution (allocation based on productivity), need (allocation based on an individual's well-being and need being closely linked to group success), and equality (allocation in equal amounts to all) (Cook & Hegtvedt, 1983). Consequence-based approaches seek to attain the greatest amount of social welfare, either through providing for individuals (maximizing outcomes for

individuals to positively impact the whole), or efficiently distributing social costs and benefits (achieving the greatest positive impact for the greatest number of people) (McDermott et al., 2013). According to McDermott et al., an evaluation of equity can be made by assessing those notions of distributive justice (equality, social welfare, merit, and need). The use and endorsement of each can vary across groups and situations; "the equality rule might be considered the most adequate approach in the context of votes distribution, the needs-based rule in the context of aid allocation, and the merit-based rule in the context of job appointments" (Wegner, 2016, p. 623). According to the needs-based principal, distributive equity is most attained when programs promote the well-being of the poor (Wegner, 2016). It is important to note that environmental problems (costs) often disproportionately impact poor and marginalized groups, who do not have the power to avoid these costs (Mitchell & Walker, 2007).

In this study, benefits include ecosystem services, defined as provisioning, cultural, supporting, and regulating services, in accordance with the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (See Assessment 2005). Many CF studies focus narrowly on financial and income benefits; however, it is important to acknowledge that "social well-being and better governance, economic improvements due to non-timber forest products, […] and environmental health" are potentially meaningful benefits from community forest management (Friedman et al., 2022, p. 2).

1.3.3 Recognitional equity

Recognitional equity is the respect for and acknowledgment of knowledge systems, values, social norms, histories, and rights of all parties. Meerow et al. (2019) define recognitional equity as the "acknowledgment and respect of different groups," which includes recognizing group history and needs, and promoting respect for the group (Meerow et al., 2019, p. 796). This dimension of equity is closely linked to a group or individual's access to benefits

and decision-making spaces. Leach et al. (2018) and McDermott et al. (2013) both highlight the importance of recognition to facilitate equitable participation, which "requires recognition of all parties and affirmative efforts to ensure their inclusion and representation" (McDermott et al., 2013, p. 420). The development of recognition as a dimension of equity began as a response to the narrow focus on aspects of distributional equity, without consideration for the social, cultural, and institutional conditions that lead to poor distribution to begin with (Schlosberg, 2007). The lack of recognition and respect for these conditions leads to a direct decline in a person's ability to fully participate in the greater community, and ultimately leads to further oppression (Schlosberg, 2007).

1.3.4 Contextual Equity

Contextual equity considers the idea of access, and the uneven playing field "created by the pre-existing political, economic, and social conditions under which people engage" with aspects of procedural and distributive equity, and can determine their capacity to do both (McDermott et al., 2013, p. 420). Pascual et al. argue that all other dimensions of equity "are underpinned by a social and political context in which the existing conditions (e.g., power dynamics, gender, education) that influence stakeholders' ability to gain recognition, to participate in decision making, and to lobby for fair distribution of benefits and burdens are considered" (Pascual et al., 2014, p. 1028). The recognitional aspect of equity involves taking action based on these contextual aspects. In this way, contextual equity informs the other dimensions, though all have interdependent relationships that shift and blur across contexts.

1.3.5 Intended use of the equity framework

This framework is useful in that it breaks 'equity' down into "tangible subcategories"—or dimensions—that can then be assessed for their presence in specific cases (Haas et al., 2019, p. 207). Thus, processes and policy of the procedural dimension "can only be deemed equitable if

all stakeholders are appropriately considered and included in its creation and refinement" (Hass et al., 2019, p. 207). Similarly, "under the dimension of recognition, the consideration of an intervention as equitable is contingent on the respect for and acceptance of multiple knowledge and value systems of the different social groups involved" (Hass et al., 2019, p. 207). The distributional dimension often involves assessing how compensation or payments are distributed among the community (Hass et al., p. 2019) but could also include looking at other factors, like sense of place, employment, or community building (Friedman et al., 2022). When assessing the contextual dimension, we will look at the social, political, and economic conditions that affect the dimensions of participation, recognition, and distribution (Hass et al., 2019; McDermott et al, 2013).

Though our research questions primarily focus on aspects of distributional and procedural equity, it is important to recognize that all of the dimensions interact and inform each other, and it is important to take all dimensions into account to answer the research questions. For example, the distribution of benefits might be tightly linked to governance and decision-making processes and who is recognized and respected, and how existing disparities are addressed (or not) in these outcomes (Hayes & Murtinho, 2018). While it is important to have an understanding of different equity dimensions, McDermott et al. (2013) posit that this framework is less concerned with exploring 'precise distinctions' between these dimensions, and is intended to ensure that no aspect is overlooked by researchers, policymakers, and others.

1.4 Structure of thesis

This thesis addresses data collected in the summer of 2022 across two case studies to respond to the research question: How are equity considerations manifested in community forest management in relation to access to decision making spaces and benefits from community forest management in the western US? This chapter serves as an introduction to community forestry in the US, and the equity framework used to analyze the body of data. The

following chapter describes the methodologies used to create, conduct, and analyze this study. Chapter three and four each provide a thorough overview of the cases. In chapter five I analyze the data from both cases through the lens of the equity framework, and finally, chapter six serves as the conclusion of this thesis.

1.5 Statement of positionality

This thesis offers an examination of equity within community forests. Here I reflect on my identity and influence within this research, acknowledging the potential impact of my background and positionality on my work. The research was conducted on the ancestral lands of the Kalispel, Kootenai, Salish, Nez Perce, Shoshone, Blackfeet, Crow, and Pend d'Orielle people. The writing of this thesis primarily occurred on the traditional homelands of the Ampinefu Band of the Kalapuya people, where Oregon State University now sits, and I now live and work. The present-day descendants of these bands form the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians. As a white settler, I am dedicated to understanding the settler colonial structures that benefit me and permeate our interactions with the land and with one another.

My upbringing took place in McKinney, Texas, a suburban city within the Dallas Metroplex. Growing up, my family and I frequently went on camping trips around Texas and Oklahoma, which gave me a love for the outdoors. We did not have many public outdoor spaces near our community, but the ones that did exist were very special to me and my family and I cherish the memories associated with them. This early interest in the environment persisted through my young adulthood, alongside my developing interests in the rules and systems that shape how people govern each other. Over time, my fascination with governance expanded to include not only large-scale systems but also the intricate dynamics of community-level governance. Living in various communities, many reliant on natural resources, strengthened my conviction that communities should actively participate in decisions regarding the natural world

around them. This research allowed me to combine and peruse these interests. Before commencing graduate school, I lived and worked in Wyoming, an experience that deepened my appreciation for the rocky mountain west. Despite my urban upbringing in a different region, I was incredibly excited for the opportunity to conduct research in this region, and care deeply about this area of the world.

My academic approach is rooted in political ecology, recognizing the interconnectedness of our interactions with the natural world and systems of power. I am a proponent of community forestry, and aimed to investigate whether equal access to these spaces is available within communities with the aspiration of contributing to their betterment. This research was primarily funded by the USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) program as a part of a larger project looking at the ways community forests contribute to rural prosperity. As a member of this project, I was able to pursue my interests and develop questions that aligned with my curiosities.

When engaging with these communities, I was an outsider, and spent a brief period within each. I reached out to numerous individuals in each community, most of whom welcomed the opportunity to discuss their community forests. However, some did not respond, leaving the reasons unknown and possibly affecting the sample's representativeness. I thoroughly enjoyed my time with both communities and loved talking to people about their community forests.

It is my aspiration that this work will offer insights into the efforts of these communities, allowing others to learn and benefit from their endeavors. While maintaining a critical approach, my objective is to provide information that can contribute to increased access to decision-making processes and benefits related to community forests.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

2.1 Research approach and design

I conducted a qualitative analysis of two case studies in the western US. These case studies allowed for an in-depth understanding of each case. My research is descriptive, providing a detailed account of US CF in these two cases, and "how" equity concerns are taken into account in those cases.

While case studies allow for an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, the results are not always transferable. This method of study describes what is happening in the context of a specific site, and cannot be broadly applied to community forest everywhere. However, theories and results from this study can be used to inform other studies in the future, particularly in the western US.

2.2 Units of measurement

The unit of analysis is at the community level. I analyzed the community as a whole, as well as the dynamics and interactions between members of the community. The unit of observation is individuals (the interviewees) and documents (founding documents, meeting minutes, amendments, etc.).

2.3 Participant Selection

For this study, I chose two cases: the Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Core (BCCA Core) in Ovando, Montana, and Pine Street Woods (PSW) in Dover, Idaho. Both community forests are owned by community-based organizations (CBOs), though the BCCA Coreis owned by a local nonprofit, and PSW is owned by a local land trust.

I used a purposive sampling technique for the selection of these cases. The criteria for case study selection included location, ownership type, and timber harvest. In an effort to

maintain consistency between the two cases, I chose community forests that are located in the Western US, are owned by CBOs, and that listed timber harvest as a primary goal.

I interviewed Key Informants, and used a snowball sampling technique to identify other interviewees. Using web searches and existing social network connections (U.S. Forest Service, university partners, North West Community Forestry Association), I identified Key Informants in each CF, who serve in leadership positions within the CBOs that own the CFs. After corresponding for several weeks, Key Informants provided me with an initial list of individuals to ask for interviews that met my criteria, including board members, partners, community members, and anyone who may be a stakeholder or have interest in the community forest. In the weeks leading up to my arrival at the case study sites, I reached out to these individuals via email or phone call. Once I arrived in the location, I conducted several semi-structured interviews with each Key Informant, and a single interview with all other participants. I interviewed individuals who are either directly or indirectly involved in the community forest (Table 2.1). I used three separate interview guides: one for key informants and community forest leaders, one for community forest partners, and one for other members of the community. At the end of each interview, I asked interviewees if they knew of anyone else I should contact.

I continued the snowball sampling process until I reached information saturation, resulting in 17 interviews for the BCCA Core, and 23 interviews for PSW. While this technique has the potential to introduce bias, this form of sampling was best suited to this particular research project because it allowed me to speak with members of the community who interact with and have knowledge of the community forest. This is a purposive sampling technique, and everyone I interviewed was uniquely able to inform my research questions. Additionally, I asked Key Informants to help me gain access to documents—founding documents, amendments, meeting minutes, and other document types—that informed my analysis.

Interviewees	BCCA Core	PSW

CBO Employees	3	5
CF Leadership	7	4
Former CF Leadership	5	
Partners and Stakeholders		14
Community Members	2	

Table 2.1. In each case, I primarily spoke with people in positions of power within the community forest, a partnering organization, or the community.

2.4 Data collection

I initiated contact with Key Informants via email, and continued to discuss the study with them over email, phone, and video call. I came to interviews prepared with an interview guide that best corresponded with each individual's role or connection to the CF. I recorded interviews that were then transcribed once I completed field work. To collect documents, I used online resources and asked Key Informants for any documents that were not readily available to me. These transcripts and documents were analyzed in NVivo.

This form of data collection allows for a thick description of equity in community forests in this region. This research is qualitative, so I will not be able to use statistics or gather data from a significant portion of the population like a quantitative approach would provide. While I do not have "numbers" to back up my data, the interviews and document analysis present a richer understanding of equity in these community forests by allowing me to spend time with interviewees and the opportunity to gain an in-depth perspective.

In each case, the contextual dimension of equity is different depending on the demographic, economic, and social history of the community. I use demographic information from Headwaters Economics when possible—specifically the Populations at Risk Reports—to construct socio-economic profiles of the counties where the community forest cases are located. While this did not provide information that aligned directly with the community that is a part of each community forest case, as the communities did not directly follow county or city lines, this information provided perspective on who could be a part of these communities and which groups might not have access to distributional, procedural, or recognitional dimensions

of equity. In addition, I also acquired information–like economic profiles and first-hand feedback–from the CBOs and through interviews.

2.5 Operationalization of concepts

The following table includes the variables that were used in this study (Table 2.2). These variables were formed based on concepts found in equity literature, particularly those discussed in McDermott (2009), McDermott et al. (2013), Pascual et al. (2014), and Hays & Murtinho (2018), in addition to those discussed in section 1.3. Each variable is directly related to a dimension of equity. Some variables relate to multiple dimensions, and have the potential to relate to other dimensions depending on how the questions are answered. Each variable is also a preliminary code.

Dimension of Equity	Associated Variable/Code
Procedural Equity	Who is invited to participate in decision-making
	Information sharing
	Who participates in meetings
	Who leads meetings
	Meeting dynamic
	How are meetings organized/structured
Distributive Equity	Type of benefits
	Distribution of benefits
	Access to benefits
	Distribution of costs

Recognitional Equity	Addressing the context of inequity
Contextual Equity	who is being marginalized
	existing power structures
Procedural/ Distributive/ recognitional Equity	Is equity intentional
Contextual/ Recognitional Equity	Who counts as community

Table 2.2. Variables and their associated dimension of equity, which also served as preliminary codes.

2.6 Analysis of Data

Data has been stored and analyzed in NVivo. In NVivo, I organized and labeled sections of text—the data—with codes. I began by familiarizing myself with the text before progressing to the first cycle of coding. Each previously listed variable acted as a predetermined code. After becoming familiar with the data, I began assigning codes to information in the text, and identifying emergent codes. The coding process had two cycles, during which I tracked my thought process through annotations in NVivo and notes made in a separate document, and looked for connections among the categories. Throughout this process, I met with members of my lab group for intercoder reliability sessions where we talked through codes and concepts. The final codebook, including emergent codes, is listed in Appendix D.

After the final round of coding and several meetings with my advisor, I began the process of synthesizing the information and results from preliminary analysis, which I presented to my lab group and members of my committee for feedback. At this point, I began writing the case studies and finalizing the results of the data analysis.

2.7 Trustworthiness

      I took several steps to enhance the trustworthiness of this study. During the analysis process, I practiced intercoder reliability with other experts and peers to ensure that I coded appropriately. Additionally, I strove to be transparent in my thought processes and reflective in my own role in knowledge construction—my background and position—related to this project. I have developed a reflexive journal to track my thoughts and observe how my own biases might be impacting the research. These steps enhanced the integrity of this research. To enhance the dependability of this study, I had an outside researcher—a member of my lab group— investigate the audit trail and coding process of the transcripts to ensure consistency.

2.8 Ethical issues

      One of the main ethical concerns of this study is confidentiality. In order to maintain confidentiality, I did not release personal or identifying information beyond the members of my research team. Transcripts and direct quotes are confidential unless otherwise authorized by the interviewee for use in the research products. All data have been encrypted and stored on a laptop with strong password protection.

CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDY: BLACKFOOT COMMUNITY CONSERVATION AREA CORE

3.1 Overview

Name: Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Core

Location: Ovando, Powell County, Montana

Size: 5,609 acres

Established: 2008

Ownership: The Blackfoot Challenge

Community Vision for the BCCA Core:

> Develop a working landscape that balances ecological diversity with local economic sustainability for the future benefit of the Blackfoot watershed community. Management will entail activities that seek to conserve, enhance and maintain a balance of wildlife habitat, wetlands, water, grasslands and timber resources with traditional uses including hunting, recreation, agriculture, and forestry. These shared values for the land will be complimented through working cooperatively with surrounding agencies and private landowners (Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Council, 2017).

3.2 Community Forest Description

3.2.1 Location and Description

With a footprint of 5,609 acres, the Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Core (BCCA Core) is located just north of Ovando, Montana, in the Blackfoot Watershed (Fig. 3.1). The Blackfoot Watershed lies at the southern base of the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem—a 10-million-acre area of the Rocky Mountains that spans from the United States to Canada—and acts as a connection between this region and other watersheds and mountain ranges in Montana (Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Council, 2017). The Blackfoot Watershed contains the Blackfoot River, which is an important ecological and economic resource for the area. The land of the BCCA Core is characterized as approximately 56 percent coniferous forest,

14 percent grassland, and 30 percent wetland and riparian areas (Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Council, 2017, pg. 21). Low and mid-elevation forests on the BCCA Core are primarily pine, fir, and larch, while fir and spruce dominate the higher elevations (Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Council, 2017).

3.2.2 Ownership

The BCCA Core is owned by the Blackfoot Challenge, a local nonprofit that formed in 1993 to facilitate collaborative approaches to conservation throughout the watershed. The formation of the Blackfoot Challenge was a direct response to the declining health of the Blackfoot River—which had been listed as one of the most endangered rivers in the United States—and the threat that this posed to the local communities in the watershed (Blackfoot Challenge, 2022a). The organization works with a variety of groups and public agencies to ensure that communities remain viable and that resources are managed responsibly. Their mission is: *To coordinate efforts to conserve and enhance the natural resources and rural way of life in the Blackfoot watershed for present and future generations* (Blackfoot Challenge, 2022a).

3.2.3 Community Definition

When asked *"Who is the community that is served by the community forest?"* interviewees provided many answers—some indicated that the whole state of Montana could count as the community, while several others named the area of Ovando as the primary community served by the BCCA Core. The Blackfoot Challenge identifies the community as the whole of the Blackfoot Watershed, as did many other interviewees. It seems that while the BCCA Core is intended for the watershed, those who live closer to the forest are the most involved.

> It depends what scale you're talking about. Everyday involvement and hands on, I'd say Ovando, but big picture, long term—it's the whole watershed's (BCCA6, 2022).

> Well, this area, Ovando area has been, the people here have been key in that [but…] I think we're talking about the whole Blackfoot Watershed. You know, the whole area because it's all kind of interrelated (BCCA5, 2022).

For the purposes of this thesis, I define the Blackfoot Watershed as the community of the BCCA Core, while recognizing that those who live in and around Ovando are the primary users and are the most heavily involved in management.

3.2.4 Community Characteristics

The Blackfoot Watershed rests within the traditional lands of the Kootenai, Salish, Nez Perce, Shoshone, Blackfeet, Crow, and Pend d'Orielle Tribes (Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Council, 2017). Post-settlement, the principal communities in the watershed include Seeley Lake, Lincoln, Helmville, Potomac, Ovando, Greenough, and Bonner, spanning Lewis and Clark, Powell, and Missoula Counties. The Flathead Reservation is located along the western edge of the watershed, and is home to the Bitterroot Salish, Upper Pend d'Oreille, and the Kootenai (see Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, n.d.*).*
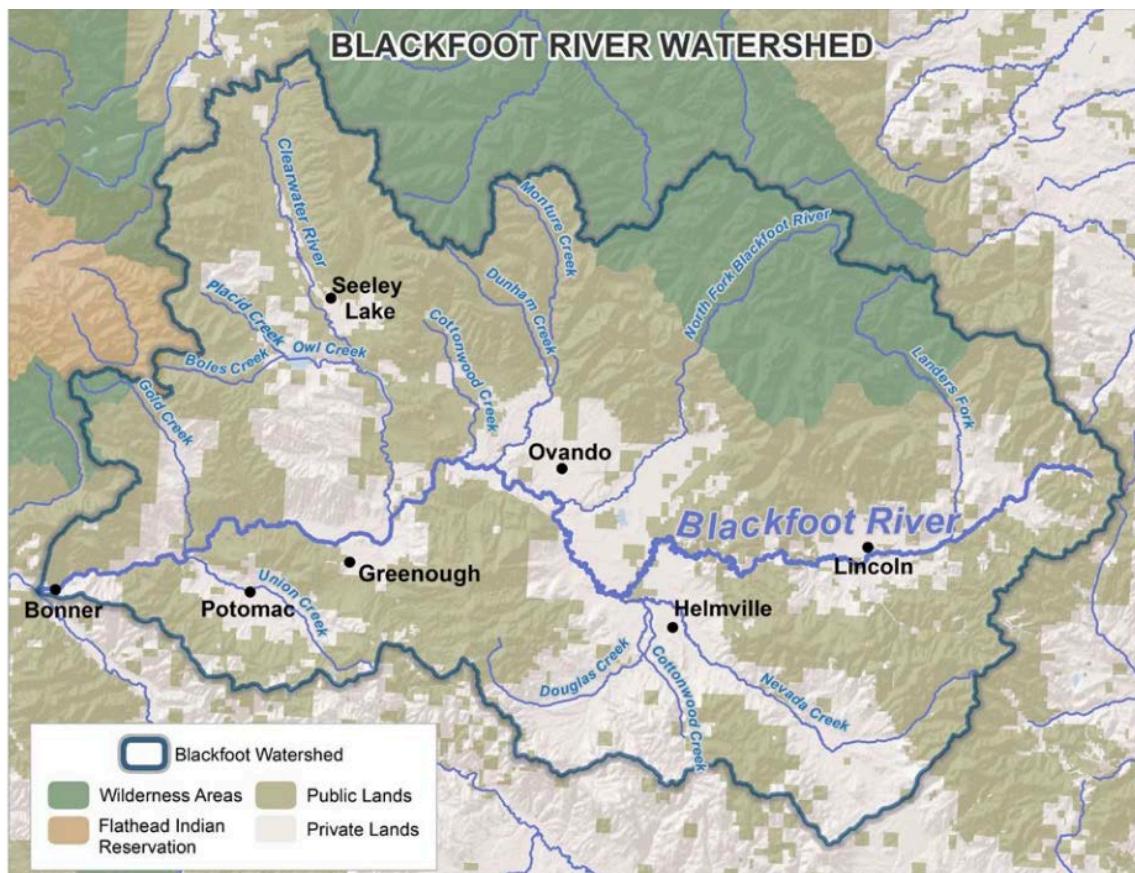
Figure 3.1. Map of the Blackfoot River Watershed (Blackfoot Challenge, 2022c)

It is difficult to pinpoint information on the watershed's population and economy because of the presence of larger cities like Helena and Missoula, which are within Lewis and Clark and Missoula counties, but just outside of the Blackfoot Watershed (Headwater Economics, 2014). The BCCA Core is located in the center of the watershed—an area that is more sparsely populated, with just over 300 people within the larger Ovando area. Headwater Economics (2014) identifies Powell County, with a population of around 7,000, as the best proxy for understanding the watershed's rural center. While Powell County has "modest long-term population, employment, and personal income growth," unemployment is high, and average earnings are relatively low (Headwater Economics, 2014, pg. 4). Just under 90 percent of Powell

County is white, while less than one percent are Black or African American, over five percent are American Indian, about four percent identify as another race, and about two percent are Hispanic (Headwater Economics, 2022a). Over 18 percent of the population is disabled (Headwater Economics, 2022a). The population is also getting older, as young adults move out of Powell County (Headwater Economics, 2014). The primary economic sectors of the area include government, tourism, timber, and agriculture (Headwater Economics, 2014).

3.2.5 Neighbors

The BCCA Core is part of the larger Blackfoot Community Conservation Area (BCCA) (Fig. 3.2). The Blackfoot Challenge—the local non-profit that owns the BCCA Core—maintains a formal relationship with neighboring landowners within the BCCA through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This MOU created the BCCA in 2008, which includes lands owned and managed by the USFS-Lolo National Forest, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, and private landowners. The BCCA Core is situated at the base of the larger BCCA, which is approximately 41,000 acres. The BCCA is a collaborative forest management effort between these landowners for the purpose of working across property lines in the watershed to maintain a healthy and working landscape.
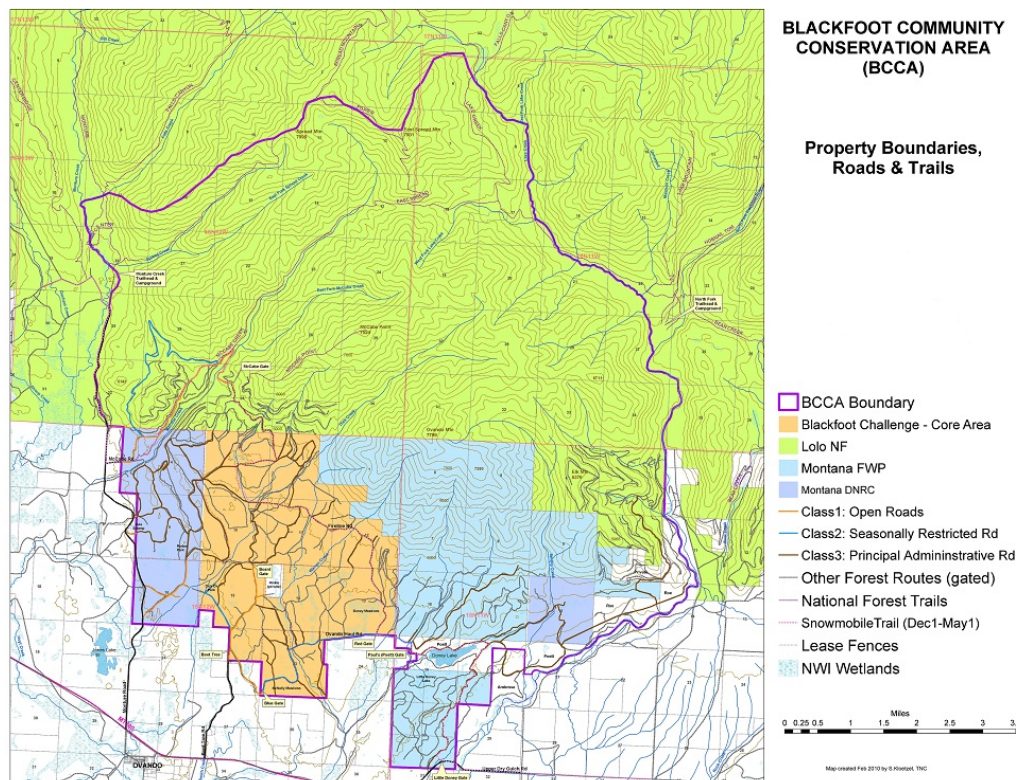
Figure 3.2. Map of the Blackfoot Community Conservation Area (Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Council, 2017).

3.3 Creation Story

The BCCA Core has a relatively recent history of ownership by timber companies, changing hands from Anaconda Forest Products to Champion International, and finally to Plum Creek Timber Company in 1993 (Duvall, 2006). Throughout the years of timber ownership, the land that is now the BCCA core was relatively open access, and the local community treated it as though it was public. In the late 1990s, Plum Creek Timber announced their plan to divest of lands throughout Montana and the Blackfoot Watershed, including holdings just north of Ovando. This worried the community, who had seen development increase in nearby watersheds, and recognized the high potential for development in the Blackfoot Watershed. Some interviewees mentioned that developers had been looking at the area, and most told me

that they were worried about the development of trophy homes (very large houses that are typically second homes), which would chop up the landscape and close off access for the community.

In the early 2000s, community members began meeting to figure out a way to stave off development. Several leaders within the community were also involved with the Blackfoot Challenge, and together they partnered with the Nature Conservancy (TNC) to work with Plum Creek Timber in an effort to acquire these lands. This effort became the Blackfoot Community Project—"the Blackfoot Challenge [provided] the link to the community and local on-the-ground management" while the "Nature Conservancy [provided] the financial backing, infrastructure and legal expertise to broker the land acquisition" (Duvall, 2006, pg. 11). The effort was successful, and Plum Creek Timber agreed to sell over 88,000 acres of former timberland to TNC, who would then hold the land until the agreed-upon public and private entities could purchase it. In the case of the BCCA Core, TNC acquired the land in 2004, and held on to it until 2008, when the Blackfoot Challenge raised enough money to make the purchase. The Blackfoot Challenge purchased 5,609 acres, while the partners purchased the remaining acreage at separate times

> Long story short, people wanted that to stay within local hands, not under the feds or this or that. So, a big push went to buy the place and develop a management plan. And through that, the idea of the community forest started coming together and a community council that was managed by community members. So anyways, the Blackfoot Challenge helped facilitate a big fundraiser for that and raised all the money needed. […] Some people had put in a little money, some people put in a lot, but it was kind of a homegrown thing (BCCA6, 2022).

The local community were the primary drivers throughout the process. To acquire input from the community, the Blackfoot Challenge hosted meetings throughout the nearby communities in the watershed. Through these meetings, community members voiced their support for a community conservation area that would allow for continued public access and

existing economic activities, while also maintaining the integrity of the ecosystem (Duvall, 2006). The Blackfoot Challenge also conducted a mail-out survey of local residents in the Ovando and Helmville areas with a 55 percent response rate to gauge their priorities and interests for the land (Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Council, 2017).

With the support of the Blackfoot Challenge, leaders within the community worked for nearly two years to develop a management plan for the BCCA Core. The Community Vision for the Core strives to:

> Develop a working landscape that balances ecological diversity with local economic sustainability for the future benefit of the Blackfoot watershed community. Management will entail activities that seek to conserve, enhance and maintain a balance of wildlife habitat, wetlands, water, grasslands and timber resources with traditional uses including hunting, recreation, agriculture, and forestry. These shared values for the land will be complimented through working cooperatively with surrounding agencies and private landowners (Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Council, 2017, pg. 6).

3.4 Governance

3.4.1 Governance Structure

While the Blackfoot Challenge owns the BCCA Core, they do not participate in the decision-making process. The management plan established a 15-member council, consisting of five representatives from neighboring agencies (including TNC), five local landowner representatives, and five user group representatives. Council members were allowed to serve two, two-year terms consecutively, after which they had to step down to be replaced by a new candidate (apart from the agency positions, which did not have term limits). Council members vote in elections, which are held anonymously. While individuals from the broader community are invited to attend and speak at meetings, they do not have a vote. According to the management plan, criteria for election to the council included:

1) the individual's ability to be an active participant for their term of appointment, 2) the individual's willingness to work positively and cooperatively to reach management decisions that best meet the goals of the BCCA, and 3) diversity of representation (Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Management Plan for the Core, 2017).

Several years later, the council updated the management plan to remove the TNC position, as they no-longer owned neighboring lands (at this point it had been purchased by agencies or other private owners). The Council also merged the categories of *landowner* and *user group* representatives into the broader category of *stakeholder* in an effort to increase community participation. This left four agency positions and created 11 stakeholder positions. At this time, the Council has also removed term-limits in response to the low number of candidates expressing interest in replacing existing council members. Similarly, they lengthened the term-limits for the Council Chair from one year to three years, with two term-limits.

3.4.2 Decision-Making Process

During the decision-making process, the council attempts to reach full consensus. To do this, they vote using 'the thumb rule'—a thumbs up means 'yes,' sideways means 'I don't like it but I will live with it,' and a thumbs down means 'no.' When a council member votes no, they are encouraged to have an alternative plan that has not already been discussed. If consensus cannot be reached, the management plan allows the Council to go to a vote. If 80 percent (12 people) on the council votes yes, then the movement passes (Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Council, 2017). Although this is allowed in the management plan, the Council tries to avoid this type of vote when possible, and will often table an issue if they are not able to reach consensus. There is also a land steward who acts as a neutral facilitator and does not have a vote. The land steward—an employee of the Blackfoot Challenge—also manages the day-to-day decisions on the core, while implementing the decisions of the Council.

In addition to the regular council meetings, there are four working groups comprised of council members that meet on an as-needed basis. These are a) the Management working

group, consisting of the chair, the vice chair, and one agency member, all of whom provide more day-to-day oversight for the land steward, and plan annual activities; b) the Forestry working group; c) the Grazing and Noxious Weeds working group; and d) the Recreation, Education, and Wildlife working group, which is the most heavily attended of the four.

3.4.3 Public Participation

All meetings are open to the public, who are given the opportunity to speak or add any issue to the agenda. Additionally, any member of the public can submit a proposal for a special request (like a bike race, research, or other event) to be looked over for approval by the council. Council meetings occur at regularly scheduled intervals, and are always held at the same place, time, and day of the week. Meeting minutes are taken and available to anyone upon request (once someone requests access to the minutes, they are added to an email list and receive minutes after every meeting). All of the meetings for the BCCA Council are open to the public and held at a consistent time and place every one to two months. Any time a council member nears the end of their term, the position is advertised over email, in the local papers, at the local post offices (where many people receive local information), on the website, and through word of mouth. The BCCA Council also holds yearly fieldtrips for members of the community and maintains a presence at community events. While opportunities for involvement with the BCCA Core exist, public participation has waned over time as contentious issues have been settled.

3.5 Forest Management

3.5.1 Management Goals

The management plan for the BCCA Core lists their goals as follows:

1. Manage habitat to promote diverse and sustainable populations of wildlife;
2. Promote a diverse multi-age forest using sustainable forestry practices;

3. Manage fuel levels utilizing prescribed fire, thinning or other land management practices to reduce the chance of catastrophic wildfire;
4. Implement riparian and wetland restoration and conservation strategies to benefit local fisheries, wetland and riparian area dependent species, and downstream resources and users;
5. Promote healthy range management practices while balancing the ecological and economic values of the area;
6. Prevent, control and/or eradicate noxious and invasive weed infestations through the practice of integrated weed management;
7. Provide for responsible recreational use at sustainable levels to benefit the public and the health of the resource;
8. Maintain a trail and road network for various forms and levels of administrative and recreational use that do not unduly degrade natural resource values;
9. Promote natural resource education, research and learning about local ecology and management through field observations, hands-on exploration and interaction with resource managers and researchers;
10. Maintain a cooperative relationship with private landowners who have in-holdings, adjacent or neighboring parcels of land; and,
11. Develop an economically self-sustaining resource that supports management of the BCCA and local community viability (p. 10)

These goals act as the sideboards for management decisions made by the Council.

3.5.2 Management Activities

While the BCCA Core management plan aims to promote and practice sustainable timber harvest, the forestland was stripped of much of its valuable timber by previous owners. The BCCA Core Council are currently in the process of waiting for the forest to grow back, although they acknowledge that this will take several decades. Currently, the primary management tasks are precommercial thinning, as well as general infrastructure maintenance. The Council hires local contractors to do much of the work on the BCCA Core, in addition to volunteer labor and classes from the University of Montana. Many of the day-to-day management tasks are handled by the land steward.

Compared with neighboring landowners—specifically state and federal agencies—the BCCA Core Council is able to make decisions and respond to problems and situations quickly. They also pair best scientific practices with local knowledge, which has allowed for flexible and innovative approaches to forest management.

> The forestry that they're doing out there is taking the best from all the agencies and applying it on a more rapid scale. It's not as big in size, but it's more rapid in effect. So, from my perspective, from the public lands looking at it, I can walk people out and say, this is what it's gonna look like when we're done. 'Cause what they've done is applied the appropriate science, looked at all the things we do, but they've done it in a quarter of the time and applied it on landscape with a little bit of common-sense mixed in. And so then when it's my turn to come in behind from the public side, I can edge match and there are no lines, it just flows across the landscape (BCCA13, 2022).

3.5.3 Forest Access and Uses

The BCCA Core is accessible year-round on foot, though there are some restrictions to motorized usage. The current Public Use and Recreation Policy allows motorized vehicles on specified trails from July 1st through August 15th, and December 1st through May 1st for snowmobiles (Blackfoot Challenge, 2022b). Motorized vehicle access has been the most contentious issue the Council has addressed, in part because of the reasons mentioned in the following quote:

> The roads are open from a certain period of time, usually during the summer with everything is dry so that they're not gonna drive, mess up their roads by driving on wet roads or get a truck stuck somewhere, but not too dry where them driving around out there on the roads is gonna cause a fire.[…] You can go out there in the summer in a vehicle on these certain roads, and you can go out there in the winter on a snowmobile (BCCA8, 2022).

The BCCA Core participates in the State of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Park's Block Management program, which opens the area for hunting. Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) such as firewood and post and pole timber can be harvested for personal use with a permit.

Special Use permits may be granted for educational events, community events, academic research, and other activities through an application process.

3.5.4 Conservation Activities

In 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquired a conservation easement on the BCCA Core, which prevents the subdivision or development of the land for any purpose, and prohibits the development of living quarters, commercial feed lots, and other industrial activities (Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Council, 2017). With the possibility of development removed, the primary threats to the management goals of the BCCA Core are severe wildfire and noxious and invasive weeds. In 2017, the Rice Ridge Fire came dangerously close to the BCCA Core—in response, the Council created and maintains fuel breaks along several of the BCCA Core roads.

3.6 Financial Strategy

The BCCA Core currently generates around 70 percent of their funds from grazing leases with three local ranches, payments from the state of Montana for participation in Block Management, and the harvest of pulp timber and other small-scale harvests. The remaining 30 percent of operating funds come from various grants and other programs. They intend to become fully financially sustainable once the forests grow back and they are able to harvest timber at a larger scale.

3.7 Benefits from the Community Forest

3.7.1 Social and Cultural Benefits

It was clear through my interviews that the BCCA Core provides a wide range of social and cultural benefits. The primary benefit that people spoke about—both during interviews and

in my interactions with members of the community—was the protection of the land from development, and the continued accessibility of the area to the public.

Timber harvest is not currently a huge benefit to the community because of the lack of harvestable stands; however, this is an important resource for the community because of the history of logging in the area. In fact, the road that leads to the entrance of the BCCA Core is called Boot Tree Road, because at the end of the road there is a tree where loggers used to toss their boots at the end of the season (Fig. 3.3).

Figure 3.3. The Boot Tree

The BCCA Core provides many recreational activities for the community. At the entrance of the BCCA Core, visitors can find a sign with a map of the area, and information about permitted activities (fig. 3.4). Many people within the community use the hiking trails in the warm months, and cross-country ski in the winter. While the use of motorized vehicles in the

summer is relatively low, it is very important to several members of the community who rely on those vehicles to access the forest. In the wintertime, the BCCA Core receives high levels of snow mobile traffic because it lies on a popular route from Lincoln to Sealy Lake. Additionally, the area has been used as a multi-generational hunting spot for people throughout the region, and has been one of the most popular Block Management areas in the state. One interviewee told me that they taught their children how to hunt on the BCCA Core, and that the land there is incredibly important to their family. Trapping is also an important benefit—while few people participate in trapping, it holds a lot of value for the people who do.

Figure 3.4. The main sign at the entrance of the BCCA Core.

The BCCA Core hosts many educational programs for local school groups who come to learn about conservation, learn how to cross-country ski, and receive avalanche training.

> We've done quite a few programs where we took kids out and had them help collect data on forest for management projects. So they would learn about forest structure and ecology, and then we would have these plots set up and the kids would help us collect data on how many trees per acre and all that, all these different forest measurements (BCCA10, 2022).

In addition to the activities the BCCA Core provides for local children, adults from within the community are able to learn about various forest management practices. Additionally, the Blackfoot Challenge has used this area to demonstrate forest management and governance practices to groups from all over the world.

> I think from an educational standpoint, because we have so many different acres and so many different practices going on out there, you talk about timber management going on and certain ways of cutting, using a cut to line system where you're leaving slash on the ground versus piling everything up and burning. Where you have the idea and the use of prescribed fire to manage the timber and the grasslands and whatnot. Because we're a community forest and we have that kind of mandate, if you will, from our kind of articles of incorporation, we have that responsibility to kind of be on the leading edge of that. And so being able to go out there and go, okay, we're gonna do some prescribed fire, and this way we can do it on a piece of ground that is an experiment, if you will. It's a benefit because then the community can see what happens to that ground afterwards (BCCA8, 2022).

Many of the people I spoke to also discussed the natural beauty of the BCCA Core, and how important it is to have a space like this for the community. The beauty of this space and the community ownership and governance of the land seem to contribute to the community's sense of place. In addition to this, several people mentioned that the creation of the Council contributes to community cohesion because it provides a space for people with different beliefs

to come together and listen to each other. Additionally, it has facilitated partnerships between landowners.

> Partnership up there is huge. I mean that's how the whole thing—our MOU with all the partnerships, all the people that signed onto the MOU and say let's try to work together on this property and to think across fence lines. All the different grants and partnerships, different agencies, good relationships with your neighbors, communicating with them what we're doing, why we're doing fixing this road, being on the phone, talking with them. […] So the beneficiaries of partnerships and relationships—I feel like it'd be everybody, 'cause that leads to good work on the ground. Good management (BCCA6, 2022).

3.7.2 Economic Benefits

Three ranches hold grazing leases with the BCCA Core—two local family ranches, and one that employs members of the community. It was made clear in the interviews that these ranches depend on the grazing leases with the BCCA Core to feed their herds, and that they are some of the primary people who benefit from the community forest. While the BCCA Core does not hire many people (aside from the land steward, who works part-time for the BCCA Core), there are people who are contracted to perform maintenance, harvest timber, and engage in other forms of labor (such as spraying weeds).

Several people within the community use the forest to collect non-commercial NTFPs, like firewood, logs for poles, Christmas trees, and seeds. The BCCA Core has also been an attraction for events that bring people and economic activity through the town and local businesses.

> They had a bike tour for several years that was organized and started from here. That brought a lot of money into the community. They did it on the Core. […] It was a one day tour, but they came up and camped in town. And what did they [had] 200 or 250 people. The community helped with it along with the BCCA Council to set it all up and get it going. It benefited our community strongly. […] They asked if we would make breakfast for all of them at the school. And so we made breakfast every year for them at the

school. And the kids served and the money from that paid for the kids' out-of-town and out-of-state sometimes field trips (BCCA2, 2022).

3.7.3 Environmental Benefits

The location of the BCCA Core allows it to act as a buffer between the local community and severe wildfires. The management of this land reduces the potential fuel load, and benefits the community by reducing the risk of severe wildfire. The management practices of the BCCA Core also contribute to the health of the watershed—an issue that is of high importance for the community. Several of the people I spoke with also believe that the management of the BCCA Core contributes to the health of the wildlife population, though some people disagreed.

3.8 What makes the Community Forest a Community Forest

During the interviews, I asked people what they thought made community forests different from other types of forest ownership models. The overwhelming answer that I received was community input—in a community forest, the local community has the ability to determine management priorities. In the case of the BCCA Core, some felt that this input means there is more of a focus on the economic health of the community than there would be otherwise.

> I think that's huge that people's voices are being heard. If this was managed, if only agency people were on the council, you'd see something way different. Way different, no question. I see this council as a little bit more utilitarian in a way. Not to a fault, but I think they definitely want economics a part of that place. We want to have it thrive as much as possible economically with the community and recreation and whatnot. So input I think is huge (BCCA6, 2022).

People also pointed out several advantages to managing land as a community forest. Most notably was the level of community involvement, which contributes to sense of place and allows the community to feel that they have a say in the management of the forestlands around

them. One person pointed out that although there is public access, the land is privately owned on behalf of the community, which limits input from outsiders.

3.9 Concluding Reflections

During the interviews, many people noted that having a well thought out management plan was necessary for the success of the BCCA Core, and recommend that other community forest groups do the same. They were able to develop a management plan based on the community's wants and needs, which helped to ensure that the leadership of the BCCA Core would continue to serve the interests of the community. They also discussed how important it was that people came to the table with a collaborative mindset, and were willing to work together with people who they did not always agree with. Many people stressed the importance of setting their egos aside to work towards a common goal.

One of the biggest challenges the BCCA Core faced was acquiring the funds to purchase and manage the land. While they intend to be financially sustainable, they are not quite there yet. Another challenge that interviewees often discussed is the difference in opinion among members of the community about how the BCCA Core should be managed—this community is not homogenous, and many people have felt strongly and held opposing views on several issues.

Nevertheless, the Blackfoot Challenge seems to have achieved the majority of its goals for the BCCA Core.

CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDY: PINE STREET WOODS

4.1 Overview

Pine Street Woods

Dover, Bonner County, Idaho

180 acres

Established in 2019

Owned by Kaniksu Land Trust

Mission: *A forest for all*

4.2 Community Forest Description

4.2.1 Location and Description

      Pine Street Woods (PSW) is located in the town of Dover in Bonner County, Idaho. Dover is one of four cities that make up the greater Sandpoint area—including Kootenai, Ponderay, and Sandpoint—along lake Pend Oreille (Fig. 4.1). Situated in the middle of the Idaho panhandle, this area is surrounded by mountainous public forestland. PSW has a footprint of 180 acres across two contiguous parcels in the hills outside of town. The forest type is diverse, with Hemlock on the north facing side, and Ponderosa Pine and Douglas Fir on the south facing slopes. While the primary forest type is conifer species, there are several Aspen and Birch trees across the property.
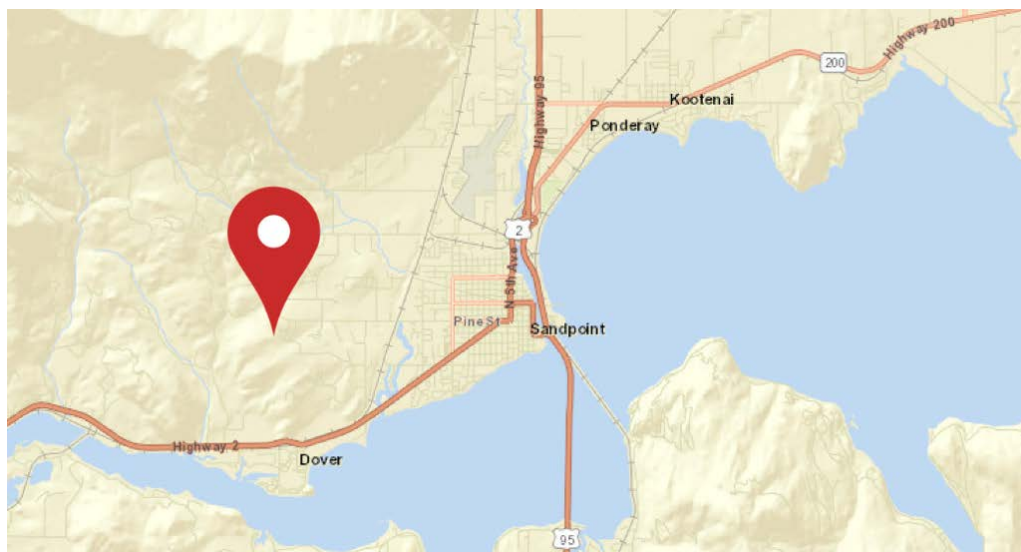
Figure 4.1. Map of the greater Sandpoint area. (www.sandpointidaho.gov/your-government/maps)

4.2.2 Ownership

PSW is owned by the Kaniksu Land Trust (KLT), a local nonprofit based in Sandpoint. Originally established in 2002 as the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Conservancy to support the Avista Corporation's conservation efforts, KLT has since become a stand-alone organization, and has been recognized as an accredited land trust since 2016 (Kaniksu Land Trust, 2023). KLT has a variety of conservation projects throughout the Kaniksu region in Idaho and Montana, and PSW was the organization's first land acquisition. Their mission is:

> Caring for the lands and people of the Kaniksu Region, today, tomorrow, and forever (Kaniksu Land Trust, 2023).

4.2.3 Community Definition

When asked *"Who is the community that is served by the community forest?"* interviewees provided a variety of answers. Many people responded that the community of

PSW is anyone who visits, which could include those from the greater Sandpoint area or people visiting from out of state.

> Some of the things that we started to develop into our strategies with Pine Street Woods was specifically things like, this should be an opportunity for every single person (PSW1, 2022).

The majority of people I spoke with identified a variety of communities, specifically communities of interest; anyone who mountain bikes, walks, hikes, skis, or otherwise enjoys spending time outside is included in the community of PSW.

> I would probably make that plural instead of singular. 'Cause I think there are many communities that exist up in Pine Street Woods. I think you could think of specific user groups from recreation standpoint. That's like an easy on the surface one, but I think it's more nuanced than that. For example, wearing the hat of education, you know, you'll have a big yellow school bus up there during the day. And so that might be a class. And then there's also parents bringing up homeschool people. […] And so there are a lot of different groups. I think community, the only thing that I could say is like community specifically, maybe across is just the ties and appreciation to the space (PSW16, 2022).

While most interviewees identified communities of interest, several also indicated that the primary users of PSW are those within Bonner County, particularly the greater Sandpoint area. For the purposes of this thesis, I define the geographic community as the greater Sandpoint area, though I recognize that this does not fully capture the entirety of the PSW community.

4.2.4 Community Characteristics

The greater Sandpoint area includes the city of Sandpoint with a population of about 8,600, Ponderay with a population of over 1,100 people, Kootani with just under 1,100 people, and Dover with just under 800 people (Headwater Economics, 2022b). Of these populations, 92

percent are white, while less than one percent are Black or African American and American Indian, and about seven percent are another race. Just under six percent of the population is Hispanic. Interviewees indicated that the community faces a growing wealth gap, as wealthy households relocate to the area for its scenic beauty and recreation opportunities.

In their *Populations at Risk* report, Headwater Economics (2022b) identified over 13 percent of individuals in the population to be at or below the poverty threshold, while over five percent are in deep poverty. While these numbers are helpful in understanding the socioeconomic characteristics of the community, one interviewee pointed out that this might not capture everyone in the community, as many of the poorer households did not respond to the 2020 U.S. Census. It is also important to note that these numbers do not capture individuals living in unincorporated sections of the greater Sandpoint area.

Because the greater Sandpoint area is located on Lake Pend Oreille, it is incredibly popular in the summertime for water recreation. A ski resort—Schweitzer Mountain—is nearby and draws crowds in the wintertime. The abundant recreation opportunities draw visitors to town throughout the year, and many of the people I spoke with consider Sandpoint to be a resort town. However, several mentioned that for much of its post-settlement history, the area was primarily reliant on timber.

4.2.5 Neighbors

While much of this region is public land, all of PSW's neighbors are residential and private family forest landowners. There are two tracts of forested properties bordering PSW; the Velo Tout Terrain (VTT) and Sherwood Forest. Both owners have existing relationships with KLT, as the organization holds a conservation easement on Sherwood Forest, and helped facilitate the acquisition of the VTT. Trails from both properties connect with those on PSW, are open to the public, and together create what is known as the Syringa Trail System (Fig. 4.2).
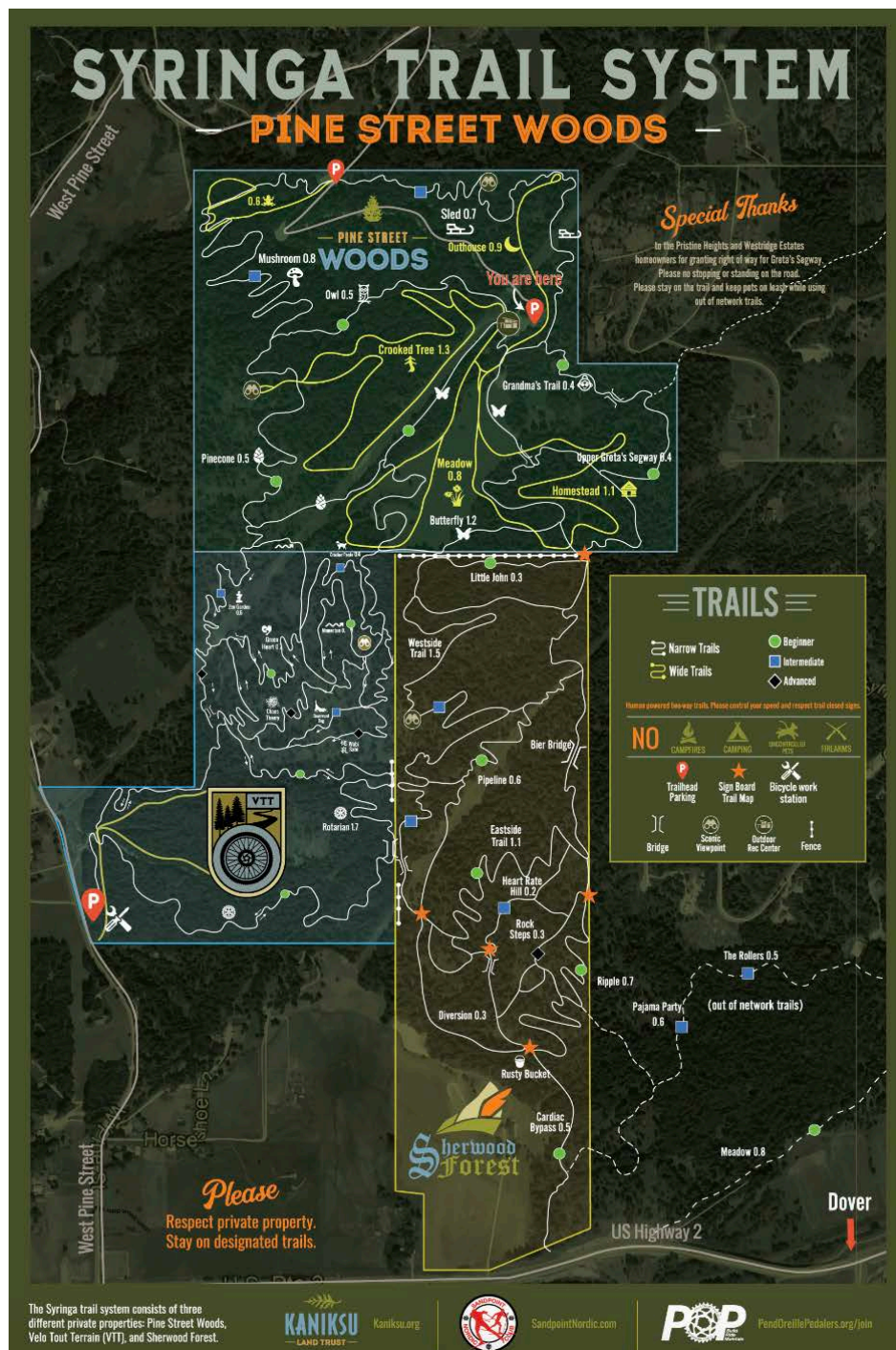
Figure 4.2. The Syringa Trail System. (www.kaniksu.org/pinestreetwoods)

4.3 Creation Story

4.3.1 Previous Owners

PSW is located on the adjudicated lands of the Q'lispe (Kalispel) Tribe (Fig. 4.3). Post-colonization, the land was owned by two separate families. One family owned 20 acres of forest, and the other operated as a 160-acre homestead. Before KLT acquired the land, the larger of the two parcels was relatively open to the public. Community members were able to recreate on the property, though it was not very accessible and was not advertised for public use.
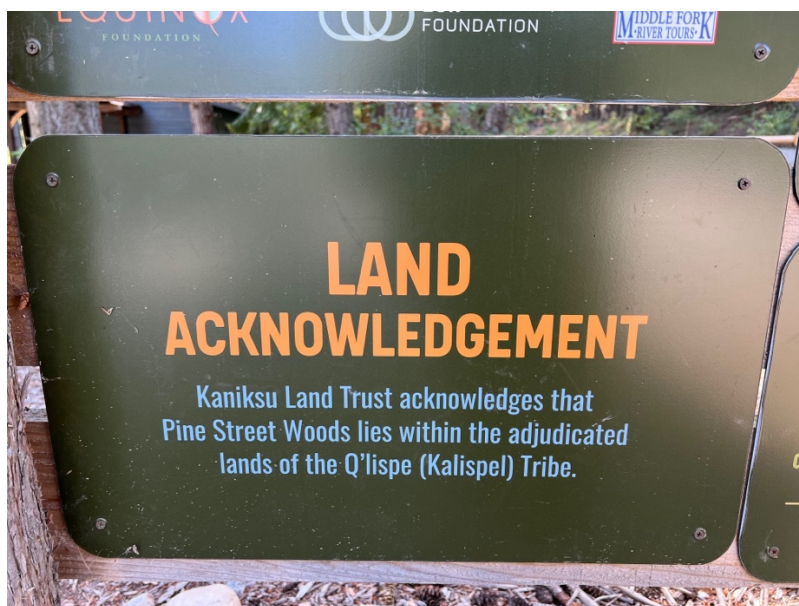
Figure 4.3. Photograph of the land acknowledgement at the main trailhead of PSW.

4.3.2 Creation Story

PSW came about after local leaders, particularly those on the board of KLT, recognized the need for accessible outdoor space within the community. While the greater Sandpoint area is surrounded by public land, the barriers to access are high—requiring transportation, being comfortable with the outdoors, the ability to traverse steep terrain, and so on. One person told

me about their experience attending a conference with leadership from other land trusts, which

helped form the idea that became PSW.

> A number of land trusts presented [on what was] a huge turning point for them. And their trajectory as Land Trusts was when they acquired—and they all had different ways to define Signature landscape—but when they acquired, created, contributed to their communities, something that they called a Signature Landscape… that's when communities really recognized the value of what the Land Trust was doing. Oh I couldn't stop talking about it. [...] That was the kernel for Pine Street Woods. So that was 10 years ago next month. October, 2012. We got our first grant in 2014. We were up over a million dollars in funds raised in 2016, and we'd identified the property. We didn't publicly announce our campaign until January, 2017. We [...] had an almost two-year contract with the family to buy the property (PSW3, 2022).

KLT applied for several grants to raise the funds to purchase PSW, including a U.S. Forest

Service Community Forest Program (CFP) grant. Through the application process, the CFP

helped shape PSW into what it is today.

> I think without the grants, Pine Street Woods would probably have evolved into much of, you know, something comparable to what it is today. But I don't know if it would be exactly the same without that marriage to that community forest program concept through the Forest Service, 'cause that really molded what happened (PSW6, 2022).

KLT bought the 160-acre property in 2019. During the public campaign for PSW, KLT

reached out to neighboring landowners, and contacted an individual who owned 20 acres next

to the 160-acre parcel. After learning about the project, that individual donated the 20-acre

property to KLT. In September of 2019, KLT was able to open PSW to the public. Currently, KLT is

in the process of acquiring a 48-acre parcel at the base of the hill where PSW is located. Known

locally as the Sled Hill, this property has been used by the community for decades as a place to

recreate in the winter—a tradition that will continue as it becomes a part of PSW.

4.3.3 Community Involvement

Once KLT began the process of creating a community forest, the community became involved in a variety of ways. KLT held several community-wide fundraising events, and wealthier members of the community participated in a Capital Campaign. Once KLT secured the funds to purchase the property, the community became involved in the effort to build the necessary infrastructure on PSW.

> Once we were able to secure that money, then we put together different committees in order to help set the vision for the community forest. There was a large [steering] committee that looked at the broad vision. [...] And then underneath that steering committee, we had a trails committee and we had a forest management committee. We also had an implementation committee, which worked [on the] infrastructure. And so they handled the outdoor recreation center, the sign kiosk, the bathroom, the parking facilities. Then we had... the trail committee was really working basically on, what are we trying to do in terms of our trails? [...] Then we had the forest management committee that was made up of, um, forestry professionals from, everywhere from an arborist up to members of our supporting businesses like Idaho Forest Group, who loaned us their forestry professionals to help write the forest management plan. So, um, in terms of implementation, it was really important that we had all of these members of the community working on all of these committees, and working really, really fast too (PSW5, 2022).

4.4 Governance

4.4.1 Governance Structure and Decision-Making Processes

As the owner of PSW, the formal governance structure of PSW includes the KLT Board of Directors. The board is relatively small, with fewer than 10 people serving at any given time. The board's primary purposes are to ensure that KLT stays true to its mission and functions appropriately, while also maintaining financial sustainability. While the board is relatively hands off with day-to-day decisions, they do maintain ultimate decision-making authority over PSW.

The majority of decisions—particularly day-to-day—are made by the staff of KLT, namely the executive and conservation directors.

Additionally, KLT holds a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with two other local nonprofits: the Nordic Club, which is a Nordic skiing organization, and the Pend Oreille Peddlers (POP), which are the local mountain biking group. While KLT maintains ownership of PSW, the three organizations share management responsibilities for the upkeep of the trails, and the Nordic Club owns and manages a community center on the property.

While the steering committee dissolved after the creation of PSW, the forestry committee and trails committee still exist and provide input to the management of the community forest. The forestry committee is comprised of forestry professionals who provide expert opinions on the management of forestland, and the trails committee is made up of volunteers from the recreation community (namely POP and the Nordic Club) who help maintain trails. These committees also act as channels for community involvement.

KLT staff solicit input from the broader community through public events and surveys, and answer questions over email, phone calls, and social media messages. A land manager lives on-site at PSW, and interacts with the public—answering questions and addressing issues—on a daily basis.

> Well, [the executive director] does a great job of communicating to the public through the various media, and the stuff that I do with the [trails] committee, when we make decisions about what we're gonna do, then [the executive director] will take the plan to the board, get the approval, you know, which trails are we gonna build and how many miles and all that kind of thing. But then when we've got those trails built, there's usually something in the print media and, on the radio and then social media, but the real word gets around with word of the mouth, because people will go out there, be walking… oh, look, there's a new trail here, or they fixed this problem over here, or whatever. So, it's a range of social media, print media, radio, and word of mouth (PSW12, 2022).

People just love it. So they definitely post a lot on social media. On Facebook Messenger and Instagram, we get a lot of messages from people. And then we're always up there, so we just hear things from people. And it's great having a land manager now because [he is] up there and he's got a really strong presence up there, and people know him and they know that he's affiliated with us, so they'll tell him things. So we just get a lot of voluntary commentary from people and that absolutely shapes what we do up there. Absolutely (PSW12, 2022).

4.5 Forest Management

PSW is primarily managed for recreation and environmental education, though both require a healthy forest. Many of the people I spoke with noted that the forests on PSW are currently in good shape, but they would like to see more variation in stand age. Interviewees also described the history and importance of forestry in the region, and shared their desire to see more examples of sustainable forestry practices on PSW as a way to educate the community.

The conservation director and land manager—with input from the forestry committee and other professionals—are the primary people responsible for managing the forestland. The land manager lives on the property, and conducts many of the routine management tasks for PSW. Other activities, like trail maintenance, are handled by volunteers from Pend Oreille Pedalers (POP) and the Nordic Club, while snow plowing and weed control are performed by local contractors.

While PSW is open for public use, there are several rules in place to protect forest resources. For example, PSW is only open for day use, and does not allow hunting, horseback riding, or motorized vehicle usage. Although not strictly prohibited, visitors at PSW are not encouraged to go off-trail in an effort to preserve habitat for plants and wildlife. Through the interviews, it is clear that the people who come to PSW feel a sense of pride and ownership of the space, and act accordingly. PSW has rarely had problems with people breaking the rules.

Additionally, PSW is a certified Tree Farm under the American Tree Farm System (Fig. 4.4), and occasionally harvests timber when necessary (typically after a wind event or to improve forest health). While this is an important aspect of their forest management, timber production is not a primary goal of PSW.

Figure 4.4. A sign demonstrating PSW's status as a certified tree farm.

4.6 Financial Strategy

PSW is primarily sustained through grants and donations. Though PSW does occasionally bring in some revenue from timber, it is not a significant source of income for the community forest.

> I mean, it's not making money. [...] I think there's a bit more of expenditures that go out, expenses that go out than income that comes in. Generally. I mean, the thing is, when I say that, I say people that specify that their donation is just for Pine Street Woods, but of course, there's donations that come in that are more generally to support KLT. We hold a series of fundraisers in order to, the plowing costs alone, probably $7,000 a year to just

plow it. We do have an endowment in place that is to support the Syringa Trail system, first and foremost Pine Street Woods. And that spins off at this point $1,500 a year, which is just enough to cover the property tax. So I would say generally, yes, sustainable, but if we were to stop writing grants [...] and if we were to only look at fund monies that come in designated specifically to Pine Street Woods, then maybe not financially (PSW3, 2022).

PSW has largely been a product of community support through donations in the form of money, land, labor, and products. For example, the community center was donated to PSW by a local timber framer. KLT is currently in the process of acquiring 48 acres at the base of PSW with the support of the community:

We don't own it directly. We actually negotiated the purchase, but we assigned it to two friends of the Land Trust who executed the purchase. We now have a lease with those friends of the Land Trust. We will then purchase it from them a year from now. Well, why would we do that, you might ask. Purpose is, we have a number of grants that we want to go after that require that we be in the process of purchasing it. We can't already own it. And we didn't have all of the $2.1 million that we need to purchase and develop this. We have about 1.2 million of the 2.1 purchase price. So we've already raised 1.2. We have 900 to go. This gives us time to have a public campaign to raise money, go after, particularly a Forest Service grant. And this is all very transparent. I mean, they want us to do it this way (PSW4, 2022).

4.7 Benefits from the Community Forest

4.7.1 Social and Cultural Benefits

When I asked interviewees about the range of benefits PSW provides for the community, the majority noted that the biggest benefit is access to the outdoors. As noted above, although the greater Sandpoint area is surrounded by public land, much of it is not accessible for many in the community. When KLT and the steering committee began to create plans for PSW, they wanted to remove barriers to the community's ability to engage with the outdoors.

When I look at a lot of forest-based recreation, particularly in the mountain West, it actually isn't that approachable for a lot of people. A lot of the trails are challenging, physically challenging, physically demanding, and certainly a lot of them aren't very well signed, and so there's a lack of information. There's a lack of just physical ability, so when it comes down to it, it's like, oh, well, the forest trails are really for somebody that's really good with navigation and really physically fit […] and you're not, you know, you're not able to do those things. So that was a really significant driver of what we were trying to do at Pine Street Woods (PSW3, 2022).

PSW has a variety of multi-use trails of varying difficulty and length. There are narrow trails and wide trails—all of which can be used by mountain bikers and hikers in the summer—to allow for varying levels of comfort and ability with the outdoors. Wide trails provide more visibility and allow people to walk side by side. One of the main wide trails is universally accessible and is frequented by many in the community including parents with strollers, and people with mobility disabilities. In the wintertime, the wide trails are groomed for Nordic skiing, and people are able to snow-shoe through the variety of trails. The proximity to town and variety of trails allow community members with limited time the opportunity to recreate as well. The importance of this accessible outdoor space became especially salient during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Pine Street Woods definitely became an important community asset during the pandemic, because people were still able to get outdoors. What better way to practice social distancing. […] It was that instant relief valve, during the pandemic for allowing people to get outdoors, to spend some time (PSW1, 2022).

Another primary benefit of PSW is a focus on youth education and recreation. Once PSW opened, KLT began partnering with local schools to get kids outside, and has held programs to bring hundreds of students to the community forest to recreate. In the winter, students are bussed up for Nordic skiing lessons, and in the warmer months students can participate in after-school mountain biking programs. In the summer, KLT hosts a day-camp at PSW where kids play

outside and learn about the local ecosystem. PSW has also served as a space for the broader community to learn about the environment and sustainable forestry practices through guided walks, informational plaques, and classes.

> *All of [POP's] youth programs are based outta Pine Street Woods because Pine Street Woods has total beginner trails. And, and when we have like seven-year-olds who have barely ridden off road before, it's important to have those really easy trails. They even have the wide trails there, which are like cross country ski trails, which are not technical at all. So you can take a group of kids riding around one of the wide ski trails in the summer and there's really no hazards at all. There's very little risk. [...] So Pine Tree Woods has been awesome for our youth programs (PSW13, 2022).*

PSW has helped create and strengthened formal and informal partnerships across the community. POP and the Nordic Club are the primary formal partners to KLT and their operations on PSW, though they also have partnerships with many businesses throughout the area. Additionally, staff at KLT maintain a relationship with members of the Kalispel Tribe Natural Resources Department:

> When we were applying for [the] grant, we found out that the Kalispel Tribe was actually the first recipient ever of the Community Forest program grant from the Forest Service over at Indian Creek. So, we were super excited to find that out 'cause they're just a stone's throw away. So then we reached out to them and that was like the beginning of this relationship with the Kalispel Tribe, where they've really supported and assisted with the management of Pine Street Woods. We think of them as like sister community forests cause they're so close (PSW6, 2022).

Many of the people that I met with spoke about the importance of having a space for the community to gather, which is a relatively common occurrence at PSW. There are several long benches and tables near the parking lot for people to meet up (Fig. 4.5), and a large, flat area where kids play and people hang out and talk. The community center also has large tables and chairs, and provides a space for people to sit inside when the weather is less than ideal.

Even the parking lot is a space where people informally gather and interact with each other on a regular basis. In these spaces, PSW has held a variety of gatherings, including classes, club and organizational meetings, and live music.

Figure 4.5. Members of the Geezer Forum—a local senior's organization—meet at PSW.

4.7.2 Economic Benefits

Several jobs within the community are linked to PSW, both directly and indirectly. For example, KLT hired a land manager to look after the property, and the education director runs the majority of his programs on PSW. These educational programs require staff, who are hired for summer camps and after school programs. POP also hires staff to teach their mountain biking classes on PSW. Additionally, several interviewees spoke about the quality of life that PSW provides for the community, which has benefited local businesses who advertise the community forest in job listings.

Although timber harvest is not a primary priority on PSW, KLT maintains a portable sawmill on the property and harvests timber when necessary that provides locally sourced and affordable timber to the community (Fig. 4.6). Additionally, a local timber framer uses wood sourced from PSW in their builds.

Figure 4.6. Portable sawmill under a cover on PSW.

4.7.3 Environmental Benefits

Many of the people I spoke with were confident that if the land had not become a community forest, it would have been a residential development. Now, PSW provides habitat for many species, including a wide variety of birds, deer, and even mountain lions.

It's always gonna be that island of forestland with some openings in it. And so regardless of the density of development surrounding Pine Street Woods, it's always going to be that, offering wildlife habitat… especially, the bird life. That's amazing, just to be up there on a quiet summer day and observing the various birds that use that area. And so, that's a huge benefit (PSW1, 2022).

4.8 What makes the Community Forest a Community Forest

When asked *"What is the defining characteristic of a community forest compared to other ownership types?"* interviewees primarily discussed the level of community involvement and variety of uses—particularly education and recreation. Generally, people expressed that there was a sense of community that comes with having a community forest.

The fact that it's multiple use. […] Pine Street Woods, I feel like there's somebody standing at the top of the road at, with a gate open, with a big smile saying, come on in, you know? But […] that's not the same feeling I get when I go into to other, you know, public lands. Folks are encouraged to come, whereas on another type of forest management, it wouldn't look that way. And it's not that that's not welcoming, it's just [that] they have a different mission and a different purpose, and we're welcome to be there, but we're not first. And here, [we're equal], equal with, and part of taking care of the forest and part of respecting the wildlife, you know, so it is just a different feeling (PSW2, 2022).

It was really this super cool opportunity for us to actually look at what a community forest could mean. And, and I think it was the first time, certainly the first time in my life and the first time in life of a lot of people that I worked with on this project to really like, study that concept. Like what does it mean? To really dwell on the whole concept of community forest. And, and at the end of the day, Pine Street Woods was… we always called, this Petri dish from North Idaho, and how are we gonna learn on a small scale how we could treat, community forest, quote unquote on a large scale (PSW3, 2022).

4.9 Concluding Reflections

When discussing the lessons and insights they gained from their involvement in PSW, many interviewees stressed the importance of having strong leadership, a community that is enthusiastic about the community forest, and solid partnerships. These themes were present to varying extents in each of the interviews. Several people also noted that an advantage of community forest management is the ability to be nimble and respond quickly to the needs and desires of the community. PSW is there to serve the needs of the community, and the leadership at KLT have been responsive to those needs.

> I think that word community, like really engaging that from engaging the community and the management to, you know, being responsive to community needs in the planning for the forest. And just trying to foster a place that's first and foremost about the community (PSW5, 2022).

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: ANALYZING EQUITY IN THE TWO CASES

5.1 Revisiting the Equity Framework

This research is primarily focused on aspects of distributional and procedural equity, but it is important to reiterate the many interconnected and overlapping components of the equity framework. Procedural equity addresses public participation and inclusion in community forest decision-making processes, emphasizing the recognition and affirmative action necessary to include marginalized groups (McDermott et al., 2013; Pascual et al., 2014; Hayes & Murtinho, 2018). Distributive equity examines the distribution of costs, risks, and benefits based on principles of equality, social welfare, merit, or need (McDermott et al., 2013) encompassing tenure and resource rights (Essougong, 2019), as well as a variety of other services (McDermott et al., 2013; Lindsey et al., 2001; Friedman et al., 2022). Recognitional equity is the respect for and acknowledgment of knowledge systems, values, social norms, histories, and rights of all parties (Leach et al., 2018), and is often identified as a necessary step for procedural equity (McDermott et al., 2013). Contextual equity considers the circumstances shaped by existing political, economic, and social conditions in which individuals are able to access and engage with the other dimensions of equity (McDermott et al., 2013; Pascual et al., 2014).

In this chapter, I will demonstrate the variety of ways the leadership and management of these community forests have contributed—or not—to equity in each case. I will first expand upon demographic and contextual information on the communities in each case, followed by an examination of procedural and distributive dimensions of equity.

5.2 Community Context

Contextual equity serves as the foundation for all other dimensions of equity, encompassing the political, economic, and social conditions that shape interactions within a community (McDermott et al., 2013). Power dynamics, influenced by factors including gender,

class, ethnicity, race, and ability, play a significant role in limiting access to these other dimensions of equity (Gonsalves, 2005; McDermott et al., 2013; Danks, 2009). When discussing equity, it is crucial to understand these contextual factors.

As is discussed in the case study sections, it is difficult to get clear demographic information on each of these communities; however, available information from Headwater Economics (2022a; 2022b) still provides valuable insight that can help us understand each community in relation to the contextual dimension of equity (table 5.1). Both communities are rural, though the greater Sandpoint area, at around 11,700 people, is much more populated than the area of Ovando, which sits at around 300 people. The population in each case is older than the U.S. average (38.4 years) at 45.7 in Powell County and 48.2 in Bonner County (where Sandpoint is located) (Headwater Economics, 2022c), and a higher percentage of the population is disabled at over 15 percent in the greater Sandpoint area and 22 percent in Powell County. Available data indicate that both communities are majority white, at about 92 percent in the greater Sandpoint area and 89 percent in Powell County, though it seems that the percentage is likely higher in the interior of the Blackfoot Watershed. In an interview, one person from Ovando commented that one of the only people of color in the area had since moved away.

Demographic Information	The BCCA Core	PSW	United States
Population	300	11,700	
Average age	45.7 Years	48.2 Years	38.4 Years
disability	22% Disabled	15.3% Disabled	12.6% Disabled
Race	89.4% White	92% White	68.2% White

Table 5.1. This information demonstrates factors that inform the contextual dimension of equity. These numbers come from several sources due to the difficulty of attaining demographic information from these areas, particularly the BCCA Core. Through interviews, I learned that the community of the BCCA Core is about 300 people, though other information is from Headwater Economics (2022a). The information from PSW is from two different Headwater Economics reports because the average age was not available for the greater Sandpoint area, and is instead from the county-level (2022b; 2022c).

As was previously discussed, PSW and the surrounding area is on land stolen from the Kalispel.

> Just a little bit of historical context. The Kalispel Tribal lands, the Aboriginal lands, most of that land base is in Idaho, but the Kalispel Tribe, they're not a treaty Tribe, they're an executive order Tribe. And so when they were taken off of that land and put onto this reservation, the reservation is entirely in Washington, and it's like 4,600 acres […] so that's like a micro fraction of the original land mass that they utilized to be Kalispel, like the 1.3 million acres of land all the way over into Northwest Montana and then up into Canada. So that area was really important to the Kalispel (PSW20, 2022).

The BCCA Core is on the traditional lands of the Kootenai, Salish, Nez Perce, Shoshone, Blackfeet, Crow, and Pend d'Orielle Tribes (Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Council, 2017). The Blackfoot Watershed borders the Flathead Reservation, which is home to the Bitterroot Salish, Upper Pend d'Oreille, and the Kootenai (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, n.d.).

The communities of the BCCA Core and PSW demonstrate somewhat similar economic trends. Headwater Economics (2014) reports that the Blackfoot Watershed is struggling economically—particularly the interior where the BCCA Core is located—and I learned through interviews that the northern parts of Powell County are historically poor. Driving factors include the out-migration of youth, unaffordable housing, and a weak labor market (Headwater Economics, 2014). However, there are also several wealthy individuals within the community:

> So there are quite a few very wealthy people that have bought up land and ranches in this part of the world because of the beauty of it and because of the conservation, to be honest. They could buy 160-acre ranch or a 10,000-acre ranch and they know that it's gonna kind of stay the same or they'll put a conservation easement on their own land and their neighbors already have that. There's been like a few wealthies that have brought their buddies to buy up neighboring ranches. And so it's sort of, um, just snowballed into a lot of wealthy, we politely call them amenity ranchers. There's a lot of amenity ranchers in the watershed. I mean, lots of very wealthy people (BCCA14, 2022).

Many interviewees from the greater Sandpoint area discussed the increasing wealth gap, as more people relocate to the area. Sandpoint is considered a multi-season "resort town", as tourists are drawn to the ski mountain in the winter, and the lake in the summer. Interviewees identified a stark gap between those who work in the service industry (or are otherwise low-income) and those who move to the area for its natural beauty or to retire. For context, the population of the greater Sandpoint area grew almost 20 percent from 2010 to 2020—numbers that do not reflect the rise in people moving to the area in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic (Headwater Economics, 2022b).

> There's a gap in Sandpoint between some, there are some very wealthy people who live here who have beautiful multimillion dollar homes. And then there is a service economy that is struggling because now they can't afford those homes, 'cause other people are moving in from out of the community or, you know, they're working frontline jobs and they don't have, they just don't make enough. So there's this staggering wealth divide (PSW16, 2022).

> It is a hard place to live 'cause we do have real problems here. There's definitely some real issues; like my kids have gone through the school system here and I don't know that they're gonna be able to afford to stay here 'cause housing prices are crazy and the wages just don't match. And it's just really hard. And there's also a lot of poverty. There are a lot of families in this community that just don't… can't make it. And it's such a juxtaposition to be looking at these beautiful vistas and these beautiful spaces and knowing that your population struggles (PSW17, 2022).

In both cases, the communities have a history of violent settler-colonialism (Miller, 2011), older than average populations, higher than average rates of disability, and growing wealth gaps (Headwater Economics, 2022a; Headwater Economics, 2022b). These characteristics influence who is able to access decision-making spaces and benefits from the community forests.

5.3 Procedural Equity

5.3.1 Recognizing original inhabitants

Ideally, community forestry brings the governance and decision-making processes associated with forest management closer to the communities (Hajjar & Molnar, 2016). However, as we have demonstrated, communities are not homogeneous (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999), and it is important that we look more closely at who within these communities has access to these procedural spaces. The practical criteria and standards for ensuring procedural equity can vary, encompassing basic equal rights in decision-making procedures, as well as proactive measures that support groups who have historically faced marginalization in relation to natural resources (McDermott et al., 2013). Though it is difficult to pinpoint these standards, McDermott et al. (2013) argue that recognition is often identified in the literature as a critical first step. Procedural equity often absorbs the tenets of recognitional equity, as groups who are not recognized and respected can be more easily excluded from the processes of decision making. It necessitates recognizing group history and needs, promoting respect for the group, and ensuring their inclusion and representation (Meerow et al., 2019; Leach et al., 2018; McDermott et al., 2013). For example, though Leach et al. distinguish between recognitional and procedural equity, they identify the former as an "input" to a given situation, which "helps set up the context in which procedural equity emerges" (Leach et al., 2018, p. 4). For the purposes of this study, I describe these two components separately, though the linkages between the two are clear.

In each case, recognitional equity presents in different ways. For example, in their management plan, the BCCA Core discusses the Indigenous history of the area. However, one interviewee expressed disappointment with the current community's recognition of local Tribes and colonialism:

> You go to the museum here in Ovando and there's one little, tiny table in the corner that has like a couple arrow heads and a pair of moccasins, maybe a hammer, you know, or

an ax head. [...] It focuses almost exclusively on the settlement period and glorifying that, but ignores, you know, the 15,000 years of history before all of that. So that's unfortunate. And that's something that I think about a lot. We need to try to correct some of those past wrongs and be more inclusive (BCCA14, 2022).

KLT also recognize the Indigenous history of the area where PSW is located; however, they have taken steps to expand beyond recognition. Aside from the land acknowledgement, PSW has incorporated—with permission—the Kalispel names of plants on plaques along trails, and partner with the Kalispel Natural Resource Department on various projects (fig 5.1; fig 5.2).

Figure 5.1. Photos of plaques taken along the main trail at PSW, detailing the Kalispel names and traditional uses of Douglas Fir and Western White Pine.

The differences described here between these two cases is evident in other components of procedural equity as well. When I asked a leader within the BCCA Core if there had been any Tribal interest in the community forest, they said:

No, there hasn't. We often struggle with that a little bit. Even the Challenge, just connections with Tribal entities, and there tends to be just enough space between us, so there's not a lot of, we are not neighbors. There definitely would be interaction there and cooperation, but the fact that it's so far displaced, not really, we don't have a lot of

connection there. And we haven't gone out of our way to try to make a connection. But yeah, just nothing's really popped up. [...] The tribes, we, you know, we communicate a little bit with [about the] water program cause the waters are connected, but I notice Nature Conservancy's doing some overlap work with 'em, but they've got ground that's near the reservation (BCCA6, 2022).

The BCCA Core focuses primarily on maintaining relationships with neighboring landowners within the current community, and because the Flathead Reservation is located outside of the Blackfoot Valley, they have not consulted with or initiated a relationship with those Tribes, despite it being part of their ancestral lands.

Alternatively, the leadership at KLT has established a relationship with individuals within the Kalispel Natural Resources Department. Early in the process of applying for community forest funding, they realized that the Kalispel had received the same grant, and had their own CF just over the state line in Newport, Washington. After learning about this community forest—Indian Creek Community Forest—KLT leadership reached out to the Kalispel Natural Resource Department. When I asked the interviewee to tell me more about that process, they said:

> I knew the director of their Natural Resource Program and I'd sat down with him a couple times and talked about like, properties that we might, you know, they might be interested in and how we can support each other's programs. But when we found out that they had a community forest and we were having this new [community forest] that was a big deal. We, reached out to them and said, wow, can you help us? You're like, they got the first Community Forest grant, like what, how, what can you share? Do you wanna be involved in this process? And they were from the very beginning, so supportive and so enthusiastic about joining us and, and helping with what we were doing and also trying to create a relationship with it between the two properties. So, and we're, this is still developing, but someday our dream is that people will go to Pine Street Woods and, you know, they'll visit both properties because they're so close. And the two really complement each other because they have some differences, but geographically they're in comparable locations and they have similar histories, but the Tribe has some different management priorities and emphasis than KLT does with Pine Street Woods.[...] And, because of that relationship that was born through the community forest sisterhood, now the Tribe has engaged in a much deeper way in other community

projects that we have happening here. For example, we recently received a grant [...] and we identified an area here in Bonner County where we wanted to do some planning, received the Park Service grant, and then asked the Tribe to be part of our advisory team in that planning process. And they said, yes, we'd love to be part of that. So now we've got, there's another community-based project. It's community and conservation and education and recreation, all those pieces that they're, they're, um, joining us to help with the development of over in the Sandpoint community. So it's just leading to more and more partnerships together (PSW6, 2022).

I later spoke with an individual from the Kalispel Department of Natural Resources, who told me:

We have a great relationship with them. Like one of the best out of, I think of any kind of non-profit type group. They really do good work. And, so that partnership I think is solid. It's built on trust (PSW20, 2022).

And then:

We have had [challenging] relationships in Idaho in the past. Idaho hasn't been a very welcoming place to work from a regulatory perspective [...] and like with Kaniksu Land Trust, like that's a really good example of how a relationship like that can benefit both parties. But we don't have that relationship everywhere in Idaho (PSW20, 2022).

Though the geographic situations influencing proximity in each case are different, in one, the leadership reached out to and formed a relationship with the local Tribal government, while the other has not. KLT has actively built a mutually beneficial relationship with the Kalispel Natural Resources Department, and ensures that they are able to have a say in what goes on at PSW.

5.3.2 Procedural equity in community forest formation

      The formation of each community forest case was different, and in the case of the BCCA Core, public participation was key. From the outset of the BCCA Core formation, the local community members were the primary drivers of the effort, and were intentionally brought into the decision-making process by the Blackfoot Challenge and The Nature Conservancy. As the project began to take shape in the early 2000s, both organizations sent out mail surveys and held meetings to assess public perception of the project, and through this process, received formal community backing in 2003 (Duvall, 2006). These community-centered meetings continued throughout every step of the land acquisition process, and the Blackfoot Challenge conducted a second survey to gauge public priorities and preferences for the community forest. Between the surveys and the feedback received in multiple meetings, local leaders within the community developed a vision and management plan for the Core that reflected the priorities and desires of the community.

> I don't think it would've happened without people speaking up saying they want access to that still, a lot of community meetings, talking it over and this and that. [...] And then the idea came up, well, maybe we should try to buy this, that came up in a meeting. Maybe we should try to buy it. And everybody was like, Yeah, let's try to buy it. [...] I mean it was very much community based. And people didn't know what that really meant yet [...] people thought we wanna hold onto it so we can still use it (BCCA6, 2022).

      This process included feedback from wealthier members of the community, who provided substantial sums during the fundraising effort. While these large donations helped the Blackfoot Challenge acquire the community forest, one of the local leaders who was involved at the time told me that it also presented a challenge: one of the wealthier members of the community felt a particular sense of ownership over the project, and felt that they should have more of a say in what happened on the forest.

> When you say community, you better remember that it's community, not self-interest. [...] But one person got madder than hell, and said, 'here, I put all this time and got my friends to donate, lot of state friends to donate a whole bunch of money to purchase this, and now you guys wanna make it your own playground'. And Ooh. Said that right in the meeting. And I thought, boy, [he just wanted it] all locked up (BCCA2, 2022).

The attempt by the wealthy donor to sway the local leadership was unsuccessful and speaks to an adherence to concerns of procedural equity. In this way, they avoided an attempt at elite capture, which is "the process by which local elites – individuals with superior political status due to economic, educational, ethnic, or other social characteristics – take advantage of their positions to amass a disproportionately large share of resources or a flow of benefits" (Persha & Andersson, 2014, p. 1). This situation serves as an example of the local leadership not allowing a person who has more relative economic power than others in the community to influence the decision-making process; instead, they continued to prioritize the voices of the broader community.

The nature of the formation of PSW is very different from the community-driven formation of the BCCA Core. As was discussed in the case study, PSW began as an idea from within the leadership of the Kaniksu Land Trust (KLT). Once they began the process of planning PSW, KLT worked with representatives of specific stakeholder groups within the community, particularly those involved in recreation.

> My motivation to become active in [the Pend Oreille Pedalers] was about three or four years ago when Pine Street Woods was imminently going to open [...] I started personally building that relationship with Kaniksu Land Trust, with the, the hope that we'd be invited to become a partner in Pine Street Woods. And that turned out to be really easy because they were excited to have us oversee the development of trails in Pine Street Woods. So within a few months I joined the board of POP. And then over the next six months, I volunteered like hundreds of hours just, coordinating volunteer trail work parties, doing trail work myself, working with Pine Street, with Kaniksu Land Trust and the Nordic Club who was also developing ski trails in the property, to work on a plan for how all these trails interact. And that's kind of how it started (PSW13, 2022).

While many members of the community were involved in the formation and actualization of PSW, many of the decisions and procedures were conducted through these recreation stakeholder groups. This varies from the BCCA Core formation, which relied heavily on direct public input. There is some distinction in participation literature between stakeholder and public participation, which can be "traced to thinking about participation in terms of representing relevant interests (stakeholders) or thinking about democratic participation as a more fundamental right (general public)" (Sprain, 2016, p.65). Sprain posits that neither is wrong, and that each form can be a valuable method of increasing participation. However, it is important to note that the BCCA Core was a community driven project from the outset, while PSW began within KLT leadership, and gradually began to include community input once the project began to form and take shape.

5.3.3 Participatory democracy: formal structures in the BCCA

Participatory democracy is often conceptualized as a form of governance that allows the public—or all affected parties in a given situation—to come together and find solutions that achieve desired outcomes for the public good (Carr & Halvorsen, 2010). The processes established by the BCCA Council attempts to implement participatory democracy by allowing community members the ability to participate in decision-making processes.

As was discussed in the case study chapter, the BCCA Core management plan initially established a 15-member council comprising representatives from neighboring agencies, landowners, and user groups. Elected council members served two consecutive two-year terms. Later, the management plan was updated to merge landowner and user group representatives into stakeholders, and remove term limits for council-members. Of those who discussed the removal of term limits, everyone agreed that this seemed like a necessary step at the time. The Council found that when members' term limits were complete, there were often not enough

applicants to replace the retired member. Additionally, they realized that they were losing

valuable knowledge:

> The reason we did this… it was challenging to continue to fill spaces after two years. Like, oh crap. And we learned that after, if somebody's new on it, after about two years, that's about when they're starting to understand their way around and all the issues and stuff. So here we're requiring people to leave once they first get to know all the issues. So we wanted to create a little bit more of a, you know, that longer term knowledge, cumulated knowledge. You know, 'cause it's hard to manage place if you're always trying to say, what, what's that part, what's this deal. You don't even know your way around yet. I think there is a risk for it to go astray slightly. But I think it's working fine for us (BCCA6, 2022).

While the decision to end term limits was uncontroversial at the time, some of the

interviewees expressed regret over the decision:

> [We decided] we'll just do it with the term limits 'cause we need people to stay on it. We have willing people that will stay on. [...] We need to fill all the seats. And in retrospect that was probably shortsighted. We should have just done better outreach to try to engage with other people (BCCA14, 2022).

These interviewees expressed concern that the removal of term limits has contributed to

the same people being voted in repeatedly, at the expense of new members and diverse

representation. One person had been on the Council in the past, and attempted to join the

Council again as they felt their views were not being represented.

> There was more applicants than there were slots open. […] So, they voted, and when they voted, they voted the three existing members back in […] and what I have an objection with is the fact that of those three other members, none of them were willing to resign to put a new person on the committee. And this is why the term limits is so important, okay? […] I think that's, that's a hazard that with these sorts of things, you have to be pretty careful. And, and I was not the first person to have been not chosen to be on the committee in that kind of a situation, a year before, or a couple years before it

had happened, at least twice previously. That somebody new wanted come on, and an existing person got voted on instead. An existing person who had already had two [terms]. But because there were no term limits, those slots didn't open up. And so it's extremely difficult without that for any new blood to come into the committee (BCCA1, 2022).

Although scholars are still debating the impacts of term limits on diversity in governance, many argue that the presence of term limits allow members of under-represented communities increased access to governance positions by ousting powerful incumbents (Rosenblum, 2020; Carroll & Jenkins, 2001). While the scope of existing literature might not apply directly to the context of the BCCA Council, it is reasonable to assume—based on the data gleaned from interviewees—that the existence of term limits might further diversify the representation of the Council.

When asked directly if the decision-making body reflects the diversity of the community, interviewees provided a variety of answers, mostly in relation to the diversity of interests and opinions on the Council, though occasionally some reflected on the demographic representation. Many felt that the Council accurately reflected the interests of the community, while others disagreed; however, most mentioned that the makeup of the Council has changed through the years.

The community itself changes, you know, as, as people come and go. I think that there's a core group of people that have been in the Valley for a long time that, that have representation. I think they've deliberately reached out to try to make sure that it's not just Ovando folks. We have a couple that sharing one vote that are from Potomac now, you know? So I think there's a deliberate attempt to try to make sure that there's a broad range of interest represented. Can we always hit the mark? I don't know. You know, nothing's perfect (BCCA12, 2022).

Several other interviewees expressed similar sentiments: the Council has changed through the years, particularly when it comes to opinions on wildlife and conservation. While

the management plan has created sideboards and prioritizes conservation, there is a spectrum of values within the community related to the conservation—or as some labeled it, the preservation—of the ecosystems present in the BCCA Core.

> You still have the people on it that want to preserve it and no use. And we've got the people on it that want to just throw the gates open and let everybody have at'er, and you've got the people that are in between, and so you've got both sides. It, if anything, the middle, which, you know, goes both ways is a larger group now, than the either completely open or the, or the completely shut it down, you know? So that's, that's how it has changed is that, and I think that's just due to working together and people are thinking, hey, well, yeah, we got, you know, that's something to think about, you know? (BCCA9, 2022).

In addition to these changes, there has been more of an attempt to include people from outside of the immediate community, as well as electing more young people and women from the community. One of the more recently elected council members told me:

> It's mostly a male driven atmosphere. Which I think one of the reasons why I was picked by the council by the way, I just think, I think it was one of the reasons I might have been picked to the council is because they were trying to diversify a little bit and I was a lady, so I think that helped me (BCCA5, 2022).

However, we spoke to several people that are concerned about the lack of conservation representation on the Council. One person in particular told me that the Council is more pro-cattle and pro-resource extraction than they would like, and that it seems as though people who share this opinion are not represented on the Council. They said:

> Like I said, I think it's pretty cattle heavy, and maybe less on the conservation side. And that's sort of waxed and waned over the years, depending on who's on the council, but I think it's pretty heavy towards cattle now (BCCA4, 2022).

They then noted:

I don't think it's malicious. I think some of it comes from a lack of a, not enough willingness to listen to all different sides or opinions, but no, I don't think it's intentional (BCCA4, 2022).

While not intentional, this lack of willingness to listen to different opinions was mentioned elsewhere in other interviews as well. Another interviewee noted that the lack of willingness to listen to different opinions has acted as a barrier to participation:

I would say that there are probably a number of people that won't go to the meetings because they've been drowned out or shouted down too many times. Some of them are like former council people or even council chairs that just were just like, it's just gotten so hostile that they don't even want to go really anymore. So, I mean, that's truly unfortunate that the, the people that you know, yell the loudest get to stay. That's not effective, man. That's not collaborative management, but that Yeah. Unfortunately, in, you know, recent years, that's the way things have rolled (BCCA14, 2022).

The hostility includes specific scenarios that prevent individuals from joining the Council or attending meetings. For example, one person—who told us he is a controversial member of the community because of his strong conservation views—had a particularly negative experience:

I was personally threatened...We have had people who have been reluctant to serve on the committee and be, been reluctant to come and speak at the committee because of that. Okay. They say, I don't, you know, I know this person's gonna attack me (BCCA1, 2022).

In addition to the described hostility towards dissenting opinions, another former council member described situations that lead them to stop coming to meetings.

In fact, since I got off council, I don't think I've been to a single council meeting. Well, Covid had a lot to do with that. There's a lot of anti-vaxxers in there and a lot of people

that were just like, whatever, and it was just easier just to not go. And the council meetings got, you know, certainly more politicized. More unfriendly, more non-PC. A lot of like, you know, very racist, sexist jokes and stuff like that. It was just like offensive to be there, so I stopped going. Too painful to watch (BCCA14, 2022).

While there have been efforts to include more people from the broader community, the above quotes and situations reflect some of the barriers that have limited community members' access or ability to apply to the Council. While these barriers may not be intentionally placed for the purpose of exclusion, the actions of individuals on the Council have created situations that exclude certain members of the community from participating more fully. In addition to these barriers to access, there are also potential circumstantial barriers. For example, several people mentioned that the location of meetings (in the town of Ovando) and time of day (in the evening) might make it harder for people outside of the immediate community to join.

Most people are from the Ovando area because if you live further away it is hard to get there [and] we've had several people from the Helmville Valley join in. We got some from Potomac now we've had, but mostly it's people within say, a 10 mile circle or 15 mile circle just because, well, originally we were going once a month, you know, and then you had subcommittee meetings and you had more meetings and you could shake a stick at. So, that was the reason. It was pretty much all locals and, but still, I mean, we had subcommittee meetings and so it's not easy to live in Potomac and come to Ovando, you know (BCCA3, 2022)?

Throughout the interviews, people agreed that the overall structure of the council— particularly at the beginning before term limits were removed—was well set up and provided the opportunity for involvement for people throughout the community. However, several factors, particularly the removal of term limits, were noted as being a part of the Council structure that limited diverse representation, and contributed to a council culture that fostered exclusion.

In their foundational work describing the range of public participation, Arnstein (1969) notes that there are often several roadblocks to achieving meaningful participation, including racism, and other structural social and economic conditions that lead to certain people being "have-nots"—or people that have less relative power in participatory processes. In the U.S., marginalized communities have been systemically left out and overlooked in conversations of natural resource governance (Schelhas, 2002). Situations that perpetuate the othering of communities also contribute to their exclusion in these spaces. In their work on collaborative governance, Rongerude and Sandoval (2016) point out that formal processes, particularly those where community members are 'given a seat at the table', tend to further exclude marginalized groups. They say that as long as these processes "occur at times and places that are consistent with the logic and structures of privilege, then marginalized populations will never fully be able to exercise their voices as participants" (Rongerude & Sandoval, 2016, p.1). Sprain (2016) argues that "participatory spaces are not neutral: they are created for multiple purposes, providing opportunities for agency and inclusion but also exclusion and hierarchy" (p. 71). If not done correctly, these processes can perpetuate inequities, and ensure that dissenting voices are left out of the process. In the case of the BCCA Council, a culture that allows racist and sexist jokes, and the exclusion of dissenting opinions, will negatively impact procedural equity, and the ability of the broader community to participate in decision-making spaces.

5.3.4 Informal governance at Pine Street Woods

The decision-making processes at PSW are much more informal than those of the BCCA Core. As was discussed in the previous case study chapter, the KLT board of directors is the ultimate decision-making authority on the community forest, though KLT directors and staff serve as the main decision-makers. Separate trails and forestry committees help provide insight and make management suggestions, and the trails committee in particular advocates for the preferences of recreation groups. Unlike the BCCA Core, the public is not invited to the

metaphorical table, and instead provides input through less formal channels. In the case of PSW, KLT leadership are at the table making the ultimate decisions, after bringing suggestions and ideas from the community and stakeholders. However, due to the informality of this process, it is difficult to tell what is actually happening, and who in the community might be excluded.

The informal nature of the decision-making process also means that the focus on community engagement, and the relationships with informal partners is dependent on the current leadership. For example, if the current directors at KLT leave, or if there is a change in the makeup of the board, the inclusion of community voices could be negatively impacted. When I spoke to the individual from the Kalispel Natural Resources Department, they said:

> I think I like [the PSW decision-making structure] the way it is right now. I mean, I think it's… well, I mean the only thing that is, is, is I guess if he like, would be, um, I don't know how durable it is, because if [the current directors] were to go away, we would not have a voice. I mean […], that's our relationship is with them. It's not with like the forest necessarily. Like [if we were to quit] which we won't, but then that would be, there would have to be that relationship forming again. I think it might be better to have a more formal relationship with the, the community forest, board of directors or however they go (PSW20, 2022).

When I spoke with KLT leadership about the informal nature of the decision-making process, they also acknowledged that they will likely need to formalize the processes in the future. One KLT employee told me:

> I guess I'm looking forward to it evolving to getting to that point where we have, you know, more adopted standards and we are constantly heading in that direction. […] A lot of the way we manage is the result of conversations and, you know, ideas and so to kind of solidify those and kind of say, this is the book on how we manage. And I think right now we're kind of writing the book (PSW8, 2022).

PSW is relatively new, having officially opened in September of 2019. As a result, the decision-making structure is still evolving, and will likely formalize as time goes on. As has been

demonstrated in this section, there are risks with both formal processes in that those structures often exclude marginalized groups, and with informal processes in that the relationships that allow for broader community participation might not be durable.

5.3.5 Community involvement

Aside from the decision-making structures, public involvement is one of the primary modes of assessing procedural equity. Arnstein (1969) describes eight rungs of citizen participation, from manipulation to citizen control. From one to five, the public gradually gains power in the decision-making process, though power is not actually distributed to the broader community until rung six: partnerships. These partnerships "can work most effectively when there is an organized power-base in the community to which the citizen leaders are accountable; when the citizens group has the financial resources to pay its leaders reasonable honoraria for their time-consuming efforts; and when the group has the resources to hire (and fire) its own technicians, lawyers, and community organizers" (Arnstein, 1969, p.221). On a small scale, this rung of power most aptly applies to PSW, particularly when looking at KLT's relationship with POP and the Nordic Club. As local nonprofits, both organizations have their own boards, hired directors, and advocacy processes. They interact with KLT and PSW through their own processes, and share responsibility for maintenance of PSW through an MOU. However, it should be noted that while Arnstein's ladder is helpful for understanding levels of participation, it is not describing intra-community equity, and does not fully capture the extent of intra-community participation.

In their work, Agrawal (2001) describes a similar scale of participation, and while they primarily focus on the role of gender in global CF spaces, this scale better addresses intra-community equity. According to Agrawal (2001), when a group is not present for the decision-making processes or meetings, they are at a point of nominal participation, however, they reach active and interactive participation when they are fully present for the decision-making

processes. Between these two levels of participation exists consultive participation—where groups are consulted on the decision-making processes—and activity specific participation, where a group is drawn into certain activities related to community forest management. Both forms of participation could be used to describe PSW. The public is not actively involved in the decision-making processes, but are consulted, and their opinions shared during those processes. Several partners of PSW are involved in activity-specific participation, such as the Nordic Club and POP's involvement in the maintenance of PSW. It should also be noted that while this may be the case for those who are actively involved in the processes of PSW, there are likely many in the community who are less involved, and fall into the category of nominal participation.

Aside from these processes, KLT shares information about PSW with the community in a wide variety of ways including local community events, emails, and social and traditional media (they regularly engage in both types of media). They have a robust public outreach process which helps facilitate community feedback. I spoke with one member of the staff who told me about the variety of ways they hear from the public, including surveys.

> It can be print and also digital surveys. And then we try to keep 'em as small as possible, as short as possible, and then just making sure that we get them in front of the audience that we're really trying to reach. But usually it's not been quite so targeted. It's really just been, you know, getting public opinion about something, and so it's pretty casual. Just a few questions survey that we can link on social media and then maybe take, if it's a print one, we can take it to certain events and share it that way and pass it out (PSW2, 2022).

This person also told me that community feedback shapes the activities that they do on PSW. For example, it has led KLT to change rules of use related to dog visitation, as owners were letting their dogs go off leash, which frightened both wildlife and other visitors. They then said:

> I mean, we get so much just anecdotal that, you know, we don't even look for it, but people just love it. So they definitely post a lot on social media and like Facebook

> Messenger and Instagram, we get a lot of messages from people, and then we're always up there, so we just hear things from people. And it's great having a land manager now because [he] is up there and he's got a really strong presence up there, and people know him and they know that he's affiliated with us, so they'll tell him things. So we just get a lot of voluntary comment from people and that absolutely shapes what we do up there. Absolutely (PSW3, 2022).

The BCCA Core also has a robust community outreach program, though they are tailored to the needs of their own community. All meetings of the organization, including sub-committee meetings, are open to the public. Before attending the meetings, community members have the opportunity to add items to the agenda, and are given a platform to speak. Once the meeting has begun, community members are provided with the opportunity to voice their concerns or raise issues. While they cannot vote, they are able to witness and express their opinions. Furthermore, community members and other groups are encouraged to submit proposals for special projects. In the past, these proposals have included bike tours, research, and fundraisers. While the level of community member participation has decreased over time as less contentious issues have been resolved, there is still engagement when matters directly impact individuals or when there are concerns about ongoing activities.

> There is not much controversy right now, so not many people are actively attending meetings. Many years ago, when the land was closed, the community wanted more access—those folks joined the committee and spoke to members, and were able to make their voices heard or if somebody's got an issue they can write us a note or something or ask for something [or some of the motorized access to be]opened up a little bit more, people were asking why has it closed for this amount of time? It's dry. We started looking at it a little bit more and tweaked it a little bit. Cause we didn't see any reason why not to do it either (BCCA6, 2022).

Notably, the same people who told me that they had concerns about the lack of representation and composition of the council, also felt that the processes were transparent, and that they would be able to voice their opinion if they felt it necessary.

> I think they make it open to anyone. I think it's totally accessible for anybody in the community or beyond community to attend and be involved. So I don't think they're shutting any doors and I don't think they're eliminating any people from participating. I think a lot of it has to do with people like me that maybe could be more involved that aren't. So I don't think they're shutting any doors or keeping any groups out (BCCA4, 2022).

As members of the community are directly involved in decision making through election to the Council, and are able to voice their opinions and influence the process, the BCCA Core seems to best fit the final ladder of Arnstein's model: citizen control. Members of the community possess a "degree of power (or control) which guarantees that participants or residents can govern a program or an institution, be in full charge of policy and managerial aspects, and be able to negotiate the conditions under which "outsiders" may change them" (Arnstein, 1969, p. 223). Again, though it can be helpful when looking at participation, Arnstein's model does not address intra-community participation. Similarly to PSW, there are likely varying levels of participation within the community, and while those on the council have achieved Agrawal's (2001) standard for active and interactive participation, many in the community do not participate as fully.

5.3.6 Ties to other dimensions

Aspects of contextual and recognitional equity are present throughout the procedural and distributive dimensions. Both communities share similar contextual elements, such as increasing wealth disparities, above-average age, a large disabled population, and a historical backdrop of violent settler colonialism. These factors collectively shape the power dynamics and disparities within the communities, and ultimately determine who can participate in aspects of procedural, distributional, and recognitional equity. For example, while the original inhabitants

of the land are recognized in both cases, only PSW takes steps to actively go beyond recognition. Other dimensions are addressed more fully in the following sections.

5.4 Distributive Equity

Another key tenet of community forestry is the ability for the local community to derive benefits from community forest management (McGinley et al., 2022; Charnley & Poe, 2007). As was previously discussed, communities are not homogenous (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999) and it is important that we look at how these benefits are distributed and accessed throughout the community. Both the BCCA Core and PSW provide a variety of social, economic, and environmental benefits to their communities; however, neither is currently earning much income from the forest, so the primary benefits reflected in the following sections focus on access to the forest and its related non-monetary benefits.

5.4.1 Processes and outcomes: access in the Blackfoot Community Conservation Area Core

As with procedural equity, distributive equity is tightly linked to the other dimensions within the framework. For example, McDermott et al. (2013) argue that the linkages between procedural and distributional equity are often related in that processes often determine outcomes; the governance procedures and decision-making processes can influence access to benefits. Inequitable outcomes can be the result of inequitable access to decision-making spaces. Similarly, the ability to have a say in the governance processes means that people can increase their access to the types of benefits they need. This is particularly reflected in the processes and distributional outcomes of the BCCA Core.

When the BCCA Core was first created, public access was restricted. While it was possible to walk in on foot, other forms of access were only possible with a member of the Council.

When I first got on the council, it was basically closed down. I mean, to even go up there you had to have—unless you were a member of the council—you had to have a member of the council go with you, or you couldn't go up there. Like right now, you can go up there and drive them open roads if you want [...] and go up there, you can hike around. [...] To start with, we had a permit system, and then we went to just opening the gates, and we've got vehicle counters up there. We don't see any damage up there from people being up there, [...] and now we've actually extended the timeframe that it's open. We always close certain roads down during hunting season to keep them from driving clear back there. We make it, for the most part, walk in, but it's got a good access road to a lot of it too. So it's not like it's completely shut off, but I mean, it's pretty good, so that makes a difference (BCCA9, 2022).

When I asked the interviewee if they were one of the voices leading the effort to expand access, they said:

Yeah. When I came to that first meeting, the first work group meeting, I mean, they just were flabbergasted if somebody wanted to do that. But we worked it out and we got the permit thing going, and then from then on we kept going and like I said, now, just open and we have not had a problem (BCCA9, 2022).

Now, anyone can walk and drive on to the BCCA Core, and there is motorized vehicle access on roads throughout the community forest for just over two months in the summer. When describing the process of opening access to motorized vehicles, many interviewees told me that this was the most controversial issue that the Council has faced. While some wanted to limit motorized vehicle access to the BCCA Core for several reasons—including wildfire risk and concerns for wildlife—others pointed out that restricting motorized vehicle access would also restrict the ability for some in the community to access the forest. One person that I spoke with told me that they had been going to the BCCA Core for decades and rely on motorized vehicles to access the forest.

Not everybody wants to ride a bicycle. [...] Just because you've got a horse, that don't mean I gotta buy a horse to ride out there. [...] They shut it down tight and that, that

hurt to begin with. It put a real sour taste in a lot of people. [...] But, in retrospect, I still feel sorry for the people in my generation that knew this when it was open to everybody, anytime the year, you know? Now there's gates on it, restricting access to different trails and things like that for motorized vehicles (BCCA2, 2022).

While it is open to motorized access for a portion of the year, these rules still come at a cost for those who rely on this form of transportation to access the forest. As has been discussed, many within the community are older or disabled, and are not able to access the BCCA Core by foot. However, several interviewees expressed their support for the current set of access rules, particularly because of the costs (in the form of road maintenance) and risks (like wildfire) associated with motorized access.

You've gotta serve that whole community. You gotta understand that there are those people, there are people that just can't physically get out there and walk anymore, but they still want to use it. That's where the motorized vehicle po policy comes into place. The roads are open from a certain period of time, usually during the summer when everything is dry so that they're not gonna drive, mess up their roads by driving on wet roads or get a truck stuck somewhere, but not too dry where them driving around out there on the roads is gonna cause a fire. And so, but again, I mean, you've got people that grew up on that ground, worked it all their lives. Now they're 85 years old. They've got, you know, parts, new parts, hips, knees, ankles, they're just not going out there hiking. They don't own a horse. They don't want to own a horse. They're smart enough to know not to own a horse, but they own a four-wheeler. So, okay, well this is when you can go out there, you can go out there in the summer in a vehicle on these certain roads, and you can go out there in the winter on a snowmobile (BCCA8, 2022).

The evolution of rules on motorized access are an example of an inclusive process resulting in more equitable access—a key benefit from the BCCA Core. Though less controversial, the Council faced a similar situation with the issue of signage. At the beginning, hiking trails were not clearly marked, but some within the community felt that this was an issue because it presented a knowledge barrier for those in the community who are not as familiar

with the area, or are unable to walk for long periods of time. When discussing the signs that the Council agreed on, one person said:

> It's natural, it's unobtrusive, but it's there. And then we mow the path, most of those hiking trails are on old roads. This way you have some way for folks that, you know… like if I had family come out here from the East coast and they wanted to go hiking up there, that's a pretty good way for me to kill my entire family. […] But if they have a little placard on there and the trail is mowed and there's a little sign every now and again at intersections pointing which way to go, that's fine (BCCA8, 2022).

Another person said:

> We've put in a couple miles of, of marked hiking trails to open it up more for some of the folks that, that may not be as ambulatory as others, or don't have all that much time to go out there and just wander, but here's a mile and a half trail and some neat things to see on that (BCCA6, 2022).

Adding trail signage played an important role in increasing the comfortability of the broader community on the BCCA Core.

5.4.2 Distributive equity and community forest formation in Pine Street Woods

While access became more equitable over time in the BCCA Core, this was front-of-mind at the start of PSW. As the plans for acquiring PSW started to materialize, leaders from the community—particularly representatives of recreation groups like POP and the Nordic Club—were invited to participate in planning the future for PSW. When I spoke with some of the leaders who had a hand in this process, nearly every person made it clear that one of the main goals of the community forest was to increase access to outdoor recreation spaces.

A quote from one of the leaders who helped establish PSW encapsulates this:

Some of the things that we started to develop into our strategies with Pine Street Woods was specifically things like, this should be an opportunity for every single person. It was really broadening the scope of outdoor activity, typically forest based, but outdoor activities to include every person in the community. It wasn't just gonna be for people who liked mountain bike or just ski, or run, or hike, or were able bodied people, that was gonna be very broad. It was gonna be for all ages, all experience levels, and all ability levels (PSW3, 2022).

They then went on to discuss what this would look like:

Like how could we actually do that? How could we make the forest available to everyone? So we dealt with things like the concept of... well, let's say somebody's coming up here, for instance, from Texas and maybe they don't have experience with mountain lions and moose and grizzly bears. And so, they may be afraid to go into a forest, so how do you make things more approachable? Like that's just one barrier, right? An informational barrier. [...] How do you make the outdoors more available to all people in ways that we don't normally think about. A lot of times you just think about, oh, well just make a trail easier for like, a little kid. Well, yeah. That's one aspect, but that's a very small aspect of what makes a community forest a community forest. [...] When we looked at a community forest, it was really for everyone and not for a select few. And when I look at a lot of forest-based recreation, particularly in the mountain West, it actually isn't that approachable for a lot of people. A lot of the trails are challenging, physically challenging, physically demanding, and certainly a lot of them aren't very well signed. [...] There's a lack of just physical ability, so when it comes down to it, it's like, oh, well, the forest trails are really for somebody that's really good with navigation and really physically fit and, might have some skills on things like mountain biking or something, and then that's it. And then everybody else, well, those forest recreations products don't apply to you 'cause you're not able to do those things. So that was a really significant driver of what we were trying to do at Pine Street Woods (PSW3, 2022).

One of the ways KLT leadership removed some of these barriers was through their trail design. From the outset, they created narrow trails—with the feel of traditional hiking or biking trails—and wide trails. The wide trails are several feet across and offer softer grades, increased

visibility, and generally make it easier for people to walk side-by-side. They also built a universal

access trail to make it easier for community members with disabilities to access PSW.

> One of the things we did is we did get a small grant from AARP to build an all abilities trail, I guess we called it. And it was a section of trail that, that I built that was really very, almost flat, very little pitch change. And we put down a [very] small crush, gravel impacted, and made it so that wheelchairs could utilize that. But we found out that it wasn't just wheelchairs, all of a sudden we found like lots of families would go there with their kids and strollers and other things like that (PSW1, 2022).

Throughout the interviews, it became clear that equity—particularly regarding

benefits—was a central theme in the formation of PSW. This places PSW in line with the

recommendations of McDermott (2009), who described the importance of considering equity

from the outset of a community forest project. Once equity is addressed and given structural

support, it will be much more easily incorporated throughout the community forest. This

argument seems to hold, as PSW provides a wide variety of benefits to the community, and

hosts several programs aimed at increasing equitable access.

5.4.3 Approaches to the distribution of benefits

McDermott (2009) describes the variety of ways costs, risks, and benefits from a

community forest can be distributed based on principles of equality, social welfare, merit, or

need. These principles fall into two categories: consequence-based and rules based. Social

welfare is a consequence-based approach rooted in the theory of utilitarianism and aims to

maximize social welfare for the most people. Alternatively, rules-based approaches are

concerned with the individual rather than the whole, and there are several principles. For

example, egalitarian approaches focus on the equal distribution of costs, risks, and benefits,

while merit-based approaches hold that these be distributed based on an individual's

contribution or sacrifice. Finally, need-based approaches posit that allocations should reflect the

need of the individual, and should "take account of the different needs arising from the inherent disadvantage suffered by some groups" (McDermott, 2009, p. 418). When assessing the equitable distribution of the costs, risks, and benefits of a program, different approaches may be a better fit for certain situations; however, the need-based principal of distribution is more likely to promote the well-being of poor and marginalized groups (Wegner, 2016). Wegner (2016) argues that most debates on distributive equity in the context of ecosystem services focus on the need-based principle, and thus "on the distribution of socio-economic factors among the most disadvantaged members of society" (p. 623).

Though a need-based approach could be applied to some aspects of the BCCA Core—such as the increase of motorized access in response to the needs of the community—the primary distribution approach seems to be rooted in egalitarianism. Though the Council has been responsive to the needs of the community, they do not seem to actively peruse the need-based approach. For example, when discussing access to the community forest, many people responded that everyone has equal access the BCCA Core (though several noted that those who rely on motorized vehicles do not).

> I think there's, there's equal opportunity for folks to benefit for everybody to benefit. Now whether or not they take advantage of that opportunity is a different story. You know, it's open to everybody. Everybody can go up there and use it. Motorized, like I said, motorized is like two and a half months that motorized is open, so maybe they don't get as much opportunity in those two and a half months that somebody else does. But they do have the opportunity and there's good reasons why we don't open it up, whether it's neighboring properties that don't allow access earlier than that, or road conditions prevent it from happening. So yeah, I think there's equal opportunity for everyone (BCCA8, 2022).

On the other hand, the distribution of benefits at PSW most closely resembles a need-based approach. From the outset, KLT and other leaders within the community identified barriers to accessing outdoor recreation spaces and built the removal of these barriers into the

mission of PSW. After the formation of PSW, the leadership of KLT and their partnering organizations have expanded efforts to include marginalized groups from within the community.

As was previously mentioned, the Greater Sandpoint area faces a growing wealth gap. Economic inequality was a reoccurring theme throughout many of the interviews, particularly when discussing barriers to access outdoor recreation. Many discussed the costs associated with outdoor recreation (such as the cost of equipment, time needed to recreate, and access to transportation), and that the community is known as a recreation destination, but that many who live in the area are not able to participate.

> And here we are, a rural place. We have kids who are utterly disconnected from the outside world. It's terrible (PSW4, 2022).

In response to this concern, KLT, POP, and the Nordic Club started several youth programs with the aim of expanding access to these activities to kids in the community from low socio-economic backgrounds. One example of this is the Nordic Club's partnership with local schools that brings students to PSW to learn how to cross-country ski.

> So one of the things this Sandpoint Nordic Club does, we raised money [...] to build that outdoor recreation center up at Pine Street Woods. And it also houses all of our rental skis and snow shoes and stuff. [...] What it also does is three days a week, [they take] class groups out and it's free of charge for those classes. So all the teacher has to do is say, yeah, I want my fourth grade class. They come out for the morning and they just get 'em up to Pine Street Woods and then the Nord Club puts 'em on skis and, and takes 'em out for a half a day ski (PSW3, 2022).

Another member of the Nordic Club explained:

> Last year we had 700 kids up here in a span from January and February. So it's really over a span of eight weeks that we run the program. And so that's 700 local third through sixth graders. It's paid for [...] via a local grant, so it's no charge to the teacher or

> to the schools. [...] The real goal is access for all, and getting kids up here on skis. So as far as community, we are really looking to loop it all together and as soon as we can get kids on skis, up to any adult as well. The main thing is that we wanna provide access for everyone and not to have any barriers. Like equipment shouldn't be a barrier. The place shouldn't be a barrier and the trail shouldn't be a barrier either (PSW21, 2022).

Students who participate in this program receive coupons for free ski rentals for themselves, and half off rentals for their families. While there is still a cost here, the Nordic Club attempts to keep prices as low as possible so that more people within the community are able to participate.

> With the school program, our bigger goal is that hopefully by introducing kids and getting them out cross country skiing at least once with their class and having everybody have access and they all get on the gear. Then by offering the coupon, hopefully we can get families who normally wouldn't come up to then come up and see like, oh this is like actually really fun. My kid loves it, it's a great activity and it is affordable (PSW21, 2022).

However, this interviewee also recognized that their other programs, like after school ski teams, require parents to transport their children, which could act as a barrier to access.

POP has also added programs for kids to increase recreation opportunities on PSW. They have a scholarship program that allows kids to join the after-school mountain biking program at no cost, and introduced a bicycle grant program that provides mountain bikes to low-income students who express interest in the sport. This program was successful, and got six kids on mountain bikes the first year, and expanded the program to 15 second through sixth graders at the time of the interviews. When I spoke to a representative of the organization, they said:

> POP has started a scholarship program and a bicycle grant program. [...] So, you know, we're just trying to make mountain biking more inclusive. 'Cause mountain biking is an expensive sport. You need to be able to get up to the trails. If you're a single parent who works during the day, you might not be able to do that. So we're helping with transportation as well. [...] And the idea is work with one school each time to make

transportation a little easier. [...] And they can get to take the bikes home with them. You just have to complete the program and then you get to keep the bike. This is our first year, so we wanna look at opportunities, like maybe those kids after two years can turn their bike in and get a new one or something, because as they grow, I mean a 24 inch bike will only fit like a second to fourth grader, but once you're out of fourth grade, you're gonna need a bigger bike. [...] We want it to be sustainable. Mountain biking's a lifelong sport, but if you only have a bike to fit you for two years, and then you can't afford a new one (PSW13, 2022).

In addition to the programs that partner organizations have conducted on PSW, KLT has made adjustments to one of their most popular programs. Every summer, KLT hosts a day camp for children in the community, which has become increasingly popular. There are about 150 spots available at the camp, but in 2022, over 300 kids attempted to register for the camp. In order to cope with the demand, KLT leadership adjusted the application process:

We had to go to a lottery this year. Well, we chose to go to a lottery for registration because the camp, the five weeks of camp filled up in an hour once the registration went live. And of course, that preferences people like you and me who can be by our computer at eight o'clock on the prescribed day. Well, there's lots of families where that would not be possible. So, we decided to have registration for a month, and then really spread the word that registration was open, and then do a lottery as a fair way (PSW4, 2022).

Additionally, the families of children who are accepted into the camp can request and apply for scholarships to cover the cost of attendance.

PSW hosts a range of programs aimed at expanding access to benefits to a broader range of community members, which seems to fit a need-based approach. In their discussion of this approach, Wegner (2016) describes two principles of thought for interpreting the success of need-based approach: one views distribution as equitable so long as the wellbeing of the poor does not decline, while the other holds that the wellbeing of the poor should also increase, "i.e., that existing inequalities between wealthy and poor land users do not increase and are

possibly reduced" (Wegner, 2016, p. 626). While there are still barriers to accessing PSW (as there is a lack of public transportation to the community forest, which several people mentioned) programs provided by KLT, the Nordic Club, and POP attempt to increase the wellbeing of low-income members of the community.

5.4.3 Ties to other dimensions

Again, both communities share similar contextual elements, such as increasing wealth disparities, above-average age, a large disabled population, and a historical backdrop of violent settler colonialism. These shape the power dynamics and disparities within the communities, and determine who can participate in aspects of procedural, distributional, and recognitional equity.

Through these conversations, people addressed the existing inequities within the communities, and the conditions that influence a person's ability to benefit from the CF. The primary example of recognitional equity lies in each community forest's relationship with the original inhabitants of the land, but both communities are also engaged with other dimensions of recognitional equity. For instance, during my interviews with individuals from the BCCA Core, many emphasized that many in the community are disabled, and face challenges in accessing the BCCA Core. They advocated for respect and increased opportunities for these individuals to access the forest. Similarly, individuals at PSW acknowledged that low-income community members would encounter significant barriers in reaching the forest and took proactive steps to mitigate these obstacles.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

      This thesis seeks to examine how community forests promote equity in two case studies in the Western US. An objective of community forestry is to bring decision-making and benefits from forest management closer to the community, but because communities are not homogenous, some within the community may be left out (Agrawal and Gibson, 1999). My research question was: How are equity considerations manifested in community forest management in relation to access to decision making spaces and benefits from community forest management in the western US? To answer this question, I described two case studies of community forests in the western US—the BCCA Core and PSW—owned by community-based organizations. Before collecting data, I used an equity framework, describing procedural, distributional, recognitional, and contextual dimensions of equity to form the interview questions and guide this qualitative study. I conducted semi-structured interviews with community forest managers, local leaders, community members, and other stakeholders involved in the community forest. I then analyzed the data using the same equity framework. This study demonstrates a variety of ways for community forest management to contribute or not to equity in access to decision-making spaces and benefits of community forest management. Though community forest management in each case looks different, both appear to address and contribute to equity in their communities, though with critical limitations.

6.2 Key findings

      In each case, we see how each dimension of equity influences the others. The existing social, political, and economic circumstances within each community, encompassing elements like class, race, and disability, create the playing field for the other dimensions. Both cases share common features, including a history of settler-colonialism, above-average elderly populations, heightened rates of disability, and widening wealth disparities as documented by Headwater

Economics (2022a, 2022b) and interviewees. These factors shape the dynamics of access to decision-making arenas and the benefits of CF. In both cases, we see that the conditions of recognitional equity for certain groups seem to reflect their access to participation and decision-making spaces. The decision-making spaces and governance processes of each case are quite different. From its formation, the BCCA Core has been transparent, and prioritize participatory democratic processes that allow community members to participate in decision-making processes. The people I spoke with agreed that the general structure of the Council provided the opportunity for involvement for people throughout the community. However, specific elements—particularly the removal of term limits—were noted as barriers to diverse representation and contributed to a culture that fostered exclusion. Despite these issues, the open nature of governance processes and focus on community involvement allowed some members of the community to advocate for their needs, which resulted in more equitable access to the community forest. On the other hand, PSW has a relatively informal governance structure where KLT leadership act as the ultimate decision-makers after taking suggestions and ideas from the community and stakeholders. Though this informality works now, it ties community engagement to current leadership, making the process vulnerable to changes in leadership or board composition.

In both cases, the communities share a historical backdrop of violent settler-colonialism (Miller, 2011), along with populations that skew older than the national average, elevated rates of disability, and widening wealth disparities (Headwater Economics, 2022a; Headwater Economics, 2022b). These traits play a significant role in determining access to decision-making platforms and the advantages derived from the community forests. The BCCA Core faced concerns regarding the accessibility of the forest, particularly for older individuals and those with disabilities. To address these concerns, there was an increase in motorized vehicle access, aimed at improving access for everyone in the community, particularly those who could not walk onto the BCCA Core. In PSW, the leadership initiated and maintains relationship with the

original inhabitants of the land, and provides programs specifically for low-income members of the community to ensure that they are able to benefit from recreation opportunities on the community forest.

While the BCCA Core prioritized participatory decision-making processes from the beginning of its formation, PSW focused on expanding access to benefits from the community forest. Access was a huge focus at the beginning of the project, and has paid off in the form of multiple programs aimed at expanding recreation opportunities to the broader community, particularly low-income families.

Each case demonstrates ways that the community forest formation and operation and contribute to or negatively impact equity in access to decision making and benefits from the forest. The programs PSW provide support for McDermott's (2009) argument that equity should be prioritized at the beginning of a community forest's formation. By establishing equity as priority at the beginning of the project, the leadership and partners of PSW have managed to provide more equitable access to diverse benefits. Although their decision-making processes are informal, by fulfilling the conditions of recognitional equity, they have established mutually beneficial relationships with the original inhabitants of the land they occupy. The BCCA Core serves as an example of a formal democratic governance process. Though the BCCA Core Council has flaws, the governance structure has provided opportunities for many members of the community to engage with the management of their community forest and influence the outcomes.

Equity concerns manifest in distinct ways across the management of each community forest case, as each case appears to concentrate on different components of equity. In the BCCA, equity concerns around access to decision-making spaces have manifested in participatory democratic processes. The BCCA Core Council maintains a focus on transparency and public involvement, though aspects of these processes have resulted in limited access for some in the community. The focus on community involvement has impacted the distribution of

benefits as community members have been able to advocate for their access needs, which influenced the rules and secured more equitable access to benefits from the forest. Equity concerns at PSW have been primarily concentrated on providing benefits to marginalized groups within the community—a theme that has been present since the start of the community forest project, and has been successfully implemented through various programs by management and partners of PSW. Though they do appear to incorporate the voices of the broader community, the decision-making processes at PSW are informal, and very dependent on community forest leadership. Management from each case in this study prioritizes different components of equity, and each seems to have positively impacted those components to some extent.

	BCCA	PSW
Procedural	Transparent and participatory processes, though with notable barriers	Include voices from the community, but dependent on leadership
Distributive	Processes influence access to the CF	Providing access is a primary goal

Table 2.4. Key findings

These primary findings corroborate other studies of CF, particularly in the US, and in global CF literature at a broad level. Charnley and Poe (2007) state that a focus of US CF is greater public involvement and empowerment in local forest management, which enhances community members' influence. In their case study McDermott (2009) found that "benefits primarily flow to those who gained access and influence; the composition of this group reflects power relations, culture, and racial-ethnic dynamics" (p. 258). Both of these statements are reflected to some degree in this study. For example, the BCCA Core has maintained a focus on community involvement, and established a democratic decision-making process; however, the equitability of these processes is limited by existing cultural and relational dynamics. Another

common theme found in US and global CF literature holds that often, the most marginalized within a community will not benefit unless equity is made an explicit goal (McDermott, 2009; McDermott & Schreckenberg, 2009; McDermott et al., 2013; Charnley & Poe, 2007; Danks, 2009). For example, in their work on US cases, Danks (2009) observed that in order to ensure the participation and benefit of marginalized groups, community partners needed to develop specific programming—like hiring translators and providing scholarships—to lower barriers to participation and benefits. This is similar to the work PSW has done to ensure the access of low-income and marginalized groups within the community to a variety of recreation opportunities. While these results are not universally reflected across community forests, this study does speak to the need addressed in the literature to make equity an explicit goal, particularly at the outset of a community forest endeavor (McDermott et al., 2013).

6.3 Key lessons

In reflecting on these two cases, there are valuable lessons that can be gleaned for other community forests from each case. Both the BCCA Core and PSW community forests were established to address distinct community needs, which was reflected in the formation of each. The BCCA's formation involved an 18-month process that heavily engaged the community, using open community meetings and surveys to shape the management plan. This community involvement and receptivity to feedback were instrumental in shaping the BCCA Core into what it is today. Future community forests could adapt the formation processes of the BCCA Core to fit the specific needs of their community. Additionally, they could learn from the barriers to participation that exist in the BCCA Core, such as issues surrounding term limits, and fostering a culture of inclusivity. While the BCCA Core's model is impressive and adaptable to other communities, it's essential to recognize that each community is unique, requiring tailored approaches to public participation.

PSW emphasized equitable community benefits from the outset, dedicating considerable efforts to benefit their community. They leveraged existing networks to involve and represent various groups, underscoring the importance of considering equity from the project's inception. Future community forests could incorporate similar strategies of identifying barriers to access, and ensuring that these are addressed from the very beginning of the project. Additionally, KLT's strategy of identifying relevant stakeholders or potential partners could be emulated to ensure that a variety of voices are able to participate in the decision-making process. PSW stands as a compelling example, emphasizing why a focus on equity at the project's onset is pivotal for the success and positive impact of a community forest initiative.

Combining aspects of the governance structure of the BCCA Core with the distribution of benefits that is emphasized by PSW would likely reduce barriers to access for decision-making spaces and benefits from forest management, ultimately making the CF more equitable.

6.4 Limitations

While meticulous efforts were made to uphold the data's credibility, there are certain limitations to the study. Due to specific time restraints, I only had one week in Ovando and 10 days in Sandpoint, which limited my ability to connect with members of the community. As a result, my interactions were primarily confined to individuals holding influential roles within the community who displayed an interest in the community forest. In terms of evaluating equity, this constraint curtailed my ability to gain insights beyond the perspectives of individuals in positions of authority. Given additional time, this research would benefit from the perspectives of community members who are not involved in the leadership of the community forest or community. For example, I was not able to connect with low-income families who benefit from the programs of PSW or unaffiliated organizations from the area. The perspectives of the broader community, particularly marginalized groups, are essential for understanding the efficacy of equity considerations in community forest management. In the future, this research

would benefit from spending more time with each of the case study communities and expanding the interviews beyond community forest and community leadership. Additional areas of interest might include examining equity under different ownership models or community forests that harvest timber as a source of income.

As was discussed in the Research Design, the results of these case studies cannot be applied directly to broader populations. However, I have provided a detailed description of the research process and results including explicit patterns and relationships. All of these data are in the context of the two case study communities, though information from this study could be applied in future research. There is enough contextual detail to allow others the opportunity to assess transferability, and in this way the study maintains external validity to the greatest extent possible.

6.5 Contributions

An overarching goal of community forestry is to decentralize power and get local people involved in the management of the forest environment around them (Hajjar & Molnar, 2016). The literature demonstrates that CF has the potential to reach this goal, and has in some cases (Hajjar et al., 2021, Ribot et al., 2006). However, communities are not homogenous, and it is important that we learn more about who has access to the decision-making processes and benefits derived from community forest management—particularly as marginalized groups within a community are often excluded (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Christofferson, 2008) Intentionally including equity—through efforts to enhance participatory equity and distributive equity—as a goal for US community forests is an important component for improving the lives of all members in a community forest community (McDermott, 2009; McDermott & Schreckenberg, 2009; McDermott et al., 2013; Christofferson, 2008). While equity is an established need for US community forests, few studies have been conducted to assess this goal. This thesis investigates the extent to which equity considerations are manifested in

community forest management in relation to access to decision-making spaces and benefits from forest management, and adds to the body of literature discussing the importance of equity in US community forest. This thesis aims to help us understand the variety of ways community forest leadership can positively or negatively impact equitable access to decision-making spaces and benefits from forest management. This work is important, as it may influence the management in the formation of future community forests. While more research will need to be done, this study is a step forward in understanding how communities can model their community forest initiatives equitably.

Future research is needed to better understand how the equity considerations implemented by community forest management are realized by community members, particularly those in marginalized groups within the community. This study primarily focuses on members of the community who hold positions of leadership or have some form of power within the community. While this is an important and necessary step in the process of understanding equitable access to decision-making spaces and benefits from community forest management, this study cannot speak to the actual conditions of equity experienced by members of the broader case study communities.

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APPENDICIES

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCAL FOR MANAGERS, LEADERSHIP, AND OWNERS

This thesis research was conducted as a part of a larger research project investigating the contributions of CF to rural prosperity. Because of this, the following interview guides include questions geared towards the larger project, as well as this thesis.

Purpose of interview
To learn about the community forest and its history, management, and governance; and how the community forest contributes to both forest conservation and rural prosperity.
To identify factors that support success in contributing to conservation and rural prosperity; and to identify barriers to success, and policies/programs that might help overcome these barriers.
Explain confidentiality around interview data and how we will use the interview data
Informed consent to participate
Willingness to be recorded
Willingness to be anonymously quoted
Name of community forest:

I. General introduction
I'd like to start by learning a bit about you and the organization you work with.
1)   Would you please state your title and briefly describe your position?
2)   Can you tell me a little bit about the organization you work with that is responsible for managing or overseeing the community forest?
       i.   What is the mission of the organization?
      ii.   When was it established?
     iii.   Number of employees?
     iv.   Organizational structure as it relates to the community forest

II. Getting to know the community forest
Now I'd like to discuss some basic characteristics of the community forest.
[Note]: If they responded to the survey, you can start repeat questions by providing their survey responses and double checking if it is still correct or if things have changed.
1)   How big is the community forest (acres)?
2)   How many parcels does this represent?
3)   What entity currently owns the land that the community forest is located on?
4)   What is its legal organizational status (e.g., 501(c), LLC, government/subsidiary, private/fee simple)?
5)   What community(ies) or county(ies) is it located in and affiliated with?
6)   When we use the word "community" today in our interview in relation to the community forest and its users, what is the community that you think of or refer to?
7)   Please describe the dominant forest type(s) found on the community forest.

8) What is the main mission of this community forest? (Broad mission statement)
    i. What are the primary management goals for this community forest?
9) Why do you consider this to be a "community forest," as opposed to something else?
    i. What sets apart a "community forest" from other types of forests in your mind (e.g., county, Tribal, federal, private)?
    ii. If you are involved in the management or governance of other local forests, how is this one different, if at all?
10) What type(s) of land ownerships and land use(s) border this community forest?
11) How would you characterize relationships between the community forest and its neighbors? (e.g., cooperative?, neutral? conflictive?)

III. History
I'd like to understand how this community forest became a community forest.
1) When was the community forest first established?
2) Who owned the forest land before it became a community forest? Please describe the ownership history of the land.
3) How was the forest managed prior to acquisition as a community forest?
4) How did it become a community forest?
    i. Who spearheaded the effort?
    ii. What was the motivation for creating a community forest?
    iii. How did you learn about community forests as a model to pursue for owning/ managing forestlands?
    iv. Were there other important players in the process of acquisition? If yes, who were they and what were their roles?
    v. What was the role of the broader local community in supporting community forest establishment and developing its vision?
    vi. Were you able to take advantage of any particular federal/state programs, laws, or policies in establishing the community forest?
    vii. Are there any restrictions that you are operating under as a result of these programs, laws, or policies associated with establishing the community forest?
5) What do you think would have happened to this forestland if it hadn't become a community forest?
6) Has the community forest grown or decreased in size since it was first established?
    i. If yes, when did it expand/contract in size and what caused the change?
7) Are there plans to expand the community forest in the future? Please describe.
8) We are using a separate financial protocol to gather information about costs and funding sources for establishing the community forest. More broadly, do you consider the community forest to be financially sustainable at present?
    i. If yes, how long after acquisition did it take to become financially sustainable?

ii.   What strategies have been used to work towards financial sustainability?

iii.   What are the main challenges to achieving financial sustainability?

iv.   If not currently sustainable, what is your plan for achieving this in the future?

IV. Governance

Most people agree that one of the defining features of a community forest is that community members play a meaningful role in decision-making about it. I'd like to understand how decisions are made about this community forest, and who makes them.

1)   Please describe the main governing or decision-making body(ies) for the community forest.

2)   What is the composition of this entity?

i.   Positions

ii.   Community vs non-community residents serving in these positions

iii.   Current gender composition of people serving in these positions

iv.   Does the makeup of the governing body generally reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the surrounding community?

v.   Whose interests do these members represent, if selected with this in mind?

3)   Are there specific requirements that influence the composition of the governing body?

4)   What is the process by which someone becomes a member of this governing body?

5)   How long do members serve for?

6)   How has the composition of the governing body changed over time?

7)   Are members compensated?

8)   How are program and budget decisions made?

i.   Please describe your decision-making process

ii.   How do you handle day to day decisions? Long term?

iii.   Do you decide by majority vote vs. consensus vs. other?

iv.   Do you consider these processes open and transparent?

v.   Are meeting, budget, and audit documents posted for community members to access?

vi.   How are conflicts addressed in meetings? How are they resolved?

9)   How would you characterize the relationship between the governing body and the organization that is responsible for community forest management (e.g., CEO/staff)?

10)   Can you describe what a typical meeting is like?

i.   When and where do they take place?

11)   How do you gather input on forest management decisions from the broader community?

i.   Are your meetings open to the public?

a.   Are meetings advertised to the community? Are people aware of them happening? If so, how are they advertised? Who is encouraged to attend?

  ii. How often do they occur?

  iii. How many people generally attend?

  iv. Who is usually present at meetings? Who is not present at meetings? Why do you think that is?

  v. Are there particular groups who do not come? Is there a historical context that might impact this group's ability to participate?

  vi. What other mechanisms are available for providing public input?

  vii. Has public participation decreased, remained stable, or increased over time?

  viii. How do you use community input? Examples?

12) How are decisions made public?

  i. Are meeting minutes publicly available?

  ii. Where, e.g., in the office or on the web site?

13) How would you characterize the representativeness of the broader community in terms of their engagement in decision making for this community forest?

  i. Are there populations that are not engaged or are left out of decision-making?

  ii. Whose interests aren't included?

14) Do you have a public outreach program? Please describe.

  i. Are there strategies you are using to try and specifically engage under-represented groups?

15) If you are involved in the governance of other forests in your local area, how does governance of this community forest compare/contrast with the other models you are involved with?

16) Are there changes you'd like to see in the current governance structure or processes associated with making decisions about this community forest? (i.e., does the current structure have drawbacks?) If yes, what are they, and why?

V. Forest management

One important focus of our study is to better understand how a community forest supports sustainable forestry and contributes to the conservation of forest ecosystems.

1) What are the main threats to the health and ecological integrity of this community forest?

  i. Environmental threats (e.g., fire, climate change, insects, invasive spp., disease)

  ii. Human threats (e.g., neighboring land uses, WUI development, impacts from community forest users)

2) Please describe the main forest management activities that occur on the community forest, including how you accomplish these activities (who does the work).

  i. Silvicultural treatments for timber production

  ii. Wildfire risk reduction

      iii.   Ecosystem restoration

      iv.   Other forest management activities undertaken to achieve specific conservation objectives (e.g., T&E species protection)

      v.   Other forest management activities undertaken to achieve specific social/cultural goals (e.g., produce non-timber forest products, favor culturally-important spp.)

      vi.   Infrastructure maintenance and improvement (e.g., trails, roads, buildings)

3)   Do you measure and monitor the accomplishment of your forest management goals related to the above activities? If yes, how?

4)   Do you feel that the forest management activities described above:

      a.   Are effectively addressing the threats?

      b.   Are achieving your forest conservation goals?

5)   Are there specific rules that you have adopted to protect forest resources by prohibiting some activities or user groups?

      i.   How do you enforce them?

      ii.   What happens if the rules are broken (e.g., sanctions)?

6)   Have you ever pursued forest certification? If yes please describe. If no, why not?

7)   Is there a conservation easement on this community forest? If yes, please describe (in whole? in part? owned by?) If no, why not?

8)   Are there relative advantages of managing this land as a community forest for forest conservation and sustainable forest management relative to other models or approaches? Please describe.

9)   Are the relative disadvantages? If yes, please explain.

VI. Contributions to rural prosperity

Another important focus of our study is to better understand how a community forest contributes to rural prosperity by creating local community benefits.

1)   Does this community forest have goals directly focused on contributing to rural prosperity by creating local community benefits?

2)   I'd like to understand how the community benefits from the community forest, and to quantify these benefits to the extent possible. I'd also like to know who benefits. So, what are the main community benefits created by this community forest? When discussing each one, please:

      i.   describe each

      ii.   estimate how much was produced or used in calendar year 2021, if quantifiable

      iii.   characterize who the main beneficiaries are (could be individuals, businesses, clubs, other organizations), and whether they are local or non-local

[Note]: Both interviewer and interviewee should have a paper copy of the table on the next page so that they can talk through it together. Use the table as a prompting tool; no need to talk about each specific benefit or to fill in every box.

3)   Do you think that these benefits and beneficiaries from 2021 differed much in prior years? If yes, how so?

4)   Are there some community members that benefit more from the community forest than others? That benefit less? Are excluded? Please explain.

     i.   Is there a historical context that might impact this group's ability to access benefits?

     ii.   Are there programs in place to include those who might otherwise be left out (marginalized groups)?

     iii.   Is everyone encouraged to make use of or enjoy the community forest? What does this encouragement or advertisement look like?

     iv.   Are there specific activities that the community forest is pursuing to make sure that the benefits are distributed equitably? What does this look like?

     v.   Is there a protocol or process for deciding who gets access to certain benefits? If so, what does this look like?

     vi.   Where is the community forest located in relation to the community? Is it easy for all community members to access?

     vii.   Are opportunities for involvement with the community forest advertised?

     viii.   If so, how are they advertised?

5)   What are the relative advantages of managing this forestland as a community forest for creating community benefits, relative to other models or approaches?

6)   What are the relative disadvantages?

7)   Are there costs associated with accessing or using the community forest? (i.e. a parking fee, and entrance fee, etc. if recreation is one of the benefits)

     i.   Do these costs impact some community members more than others?

Benefit	Describe benefit	Quantity or L-M-H	Who benefits, local/nonlocal	# Beneficiaries few-many-all
Timber				
Other wood products (i.e., firewood, biomass)				
Non-timber forest products				

Hunting, fishing, trapping				
Recreation: non-motorized (e.g., hiking, camping)				
Recreation: motorized (e.g., ATVs, snowmobiles)				
Jobs/employment				
Local businesses				
Environmental education				
Cultural resources				
Scenic value				
Sense of place				
Religious/ spiritual				
Partnerships/ relationships				
Community cohesion				

VII. Partnerships

1)   Who are your key partners in the community forest today?
2)   Are they formal (ie. do you have agreements with them), or informal partners?
3)   Where are they located?
4)   What are their roles – e.g., in management, decision-making, fund raising, program development?
5)   Have your partners changed over time?

VIII. Wrap Up!

2)   What are some key enabling factors that have helped your community forest achieve its goals relating to
        i.   forest conservation?
        ii.   creating local community benefits?

3)   What have been some challenges to achieving
    i.   forest conservation goals?
    ii.   Local community participation goals?
    iii.   local community benefit goals?

4)   What federal, state, or local-level policies or programs would help this community forest better achieve its conservation and community benefit goals?

5)   Are there things that you would have done differently looking back, knowing what you know now?

6)   How has the community forest influenced other forest owners or forest management in your local area, if at all?

7)   What are some key lessons learned that you would share with others interested in establishing a community forest?

8)   Do you have anything additional that you'd like to say before we conclude the interview?

9)   Are there any forest management plans or other documents that address some of the topics that we discussed today that you'd be willing to share? (Shape files if we don't already have them?)

10)   Are there other people affiliated or involved with this community forest who you would recommend we interview for this study?

11)   Would you like to ask me any questions before we conclude the interview?

12)   Would you like us to keep you posted on research progress and results?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCAL FOR STAKEHOLDERS, PARTNERS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL

REPRESENTATIVES

Purpose of interview
To learn about the community forest and its history, management, and governance; and how the community forest contributes to both forest conservation and rural prosperity.
To identify factors that support success in contributing to conservation and rural prosperity; and to identify barriers to success, and policies/programs that might help overcome these barriers.

Explain confidentiality around interview data and how we will use the interview data
Informed consent to participate
Willingness to be recorded
Willingness to be anonymously quoted
Name of community forest:

I. General introduction
I'd like to start by learning a bit about you and the organization you work with.
1)   Would you please state your title and briefly describe your position?
2)   Can you tell me a little bit about the organization you work with?
        i.   When was it established?
        ii.   Where is it located?
        iii.   What is the mission of your organization?
        iv.   How does this mission align with that of the community forest?
3)   When we use the word "community" in relation to the community forest, what is the community that you think of or refer to? (geographic, interest-based)
        i.   Do you consider your organization to be part of that community?
        ii.   How long have you been in this community?

4)   What do you consider to be the defining characteristics of a "community forest," as opposed to a forest not owned and managed by the community? (e.g., national, state, county, or town forest; recreation area or park; private corporate forest)

II. Relationship with/to the community forest
Now I'd like to discuss the nature of your organization's relationship to the community forest.
5)   How did you or your organization become aware of the community forest?
6)   In what ways does your organization interact with (organization that owns/manages the community forest)? Please describe.
        i.   How long have you been interacting with (name of managing/owning organization)?

7)   In what ways does your organization interact with the community forest?
  - ii.   How do you use it, if at all?
  - iii.   Do you help with or sponsor activities there?
  - iv.   How long have these interactions been going on?

III. Governance

1)   Does your organization play a role in decision-making about management of the community forest?
  - i.   If yes, please describe. If no, please explain why not.
  - ii.   How do you provide input into management decision-making?
  - iii.   How often do you attend meetings that are open to the public?
  - iv.   Do you think that the decision-making process is transparent?
  - i.   Are there certain individuals, or a group, who lead the meetings? If so, who are they? How do they interact with other community members?
  - ii.   Who is usually present at meetings?
  - iii.   Who in the community is not present at meetings? Why do you think that is?
  - iv.   Are there other ways that you are able to voice your opinions or concerns about the community forest? [for example, written inputs, phone calls]
  - v.   Do you feel that your voice is valued?
  - vi.   Do you find information about the community forest to be easy to access?
  - vii.   Are opportunities for involvement with the community forest advertised? (Volunteer opportunities, or ways to learn about what is happening at the community forest). If so, how are they advertised?

2)   How well do you think that the interests of your organization are represented by the governing body of the community forest?

3)   How involved is the community in engaging with the community forest?
  - i.   Do you think the diverse interests of community members are well-represented in decision-making?
  - ii.   Which populations are not engaged or have interests that are left out of decision-making?

4)   Are there changes you'd like to see in the current governance structure or processes associated with making decisions about this community forest? (i.e., does the current structure have drawbacks?) If yes, what are they, and why?

IV. Forest management

One important focus of our study is to better understand how a community forest contributes to forest conservation and ecosystem health.

1)   What are the forest conservation and ecosystem health goals that you would like to see the community forest contribute to?
2)   What are the main threats to the conservation and health of this community forest?
        i.   Environmental threats (e.g., fire, climate change, insects, invasive spp., disease)
        ii.   Human threats (e.g., neighboring land uses, WUI development, impacts from users)
3) How well do you think that management of the community forest:
        i.   is addressing these threats?
        ii.   is achieving the forest conservation and ecosystem health goals that you care about?

4)   How has the community forest influenced forest management by other forest owners in the area, if at all?

V. Contributions to rural prosperity
Another important focus of our study is to better understand how a community forest creates local community benefits.
1)   How has the community forest benefitted you/your organization/people affiliated with your organization?
2)   What would you say are the most important benefits (~top 3) that the community receives from this CF?
3)   I'd like to understand the range of community benefits from the community forest. To do this we have prepared a table that we can talk through together. The table lists a number of ways in which communities potentially benefit from community forests. They may or may not all be relevant here, and some benefits may be missing, feel free to add.
        i.   What are the main community benefits created by this community forest? Please describe.
        ii.   For each, can you estimate how much was produced or used in calendar year 2021, if quantifiable? If not, was the benefit low, medium, or high?
        iii.   Who are the main beneficiaries (could be individuals, businesses, clubs, other organizations), and are they local or non-local?
        iv.   Would you say only a few people benefit from each item, a medium number benefit, many people benefit, or everyone benefits?

[Note]: Both interviewer and interviewee should have a paper copy of the table on the next page so that they can talk through it together. Use the table as a prompting tool; no need to talk about each specific benefit or to fill in every box.

4)   Are there some community members that benefit more from the community forest than others? That benefit less? Are excluded? Please explain.
      i.   Are there programs in place to include those who might otherwise be left out?
      ii.   Is everyone encouraged to make use of or enjoy the community forest? What does this encouragement or advertisement look like?
      iii.   Are there specific activities that the community forest is pursuing to make sure that the benefits are distributed equitably? What does this look like?
      iv.   Is there a protocol or process for deciding who gets access to certain benefits? If so, what does this look like?
      v.   Is it easy for all community members to access?
      vi.   Are opportunities for involvement with the community forest advertised?
      i.   If so, how are they advertised?

5)   Are there costs associated with accessing or using the community forest? (i.e. a parking fee, and entrance fee, etc. if recreation is one of the benefits)
      i.   Do these costs impact some community members more than others?

6)   In what ways would you like to see the community forest benefit the local community more broadly?

Benefit	Describe benefit	Quantity or L-M-H	Who benefits, local/nonlocal	# Beneficiaries few-many-all
Timber				
Other wood products (i.e., firewood, biomass)				
Non-timber forest products				
Hunting, fishing, trapping				
Recreation: non-motorized (e.g., hiking, camping)				
Recreation: motorized (e.g., ATVs, snowmobiles)				
Jobs/employment				
Local businesses				

Environmental education				
Cultural resources				
Scenic value				
Sense of place				
Religious/ spiritual				
Partnerships/ relationships				
Community cohesion				

I. Wrap Up!

1)   What are the relative advantages of managing this forestland as a community forest, relative to other models or approaches? (e.g., national, state, county, or town forest; private corporate forest)

2)   What are the relative disadvantages?

3)   What are some key enabling factors that have helped the community forest achieve its goals relating to

      i.   forest conservation?

      ii.   Local community participation goals?

      iii.   creating local community benefits?

4)   What have been some challenges to achieving

      iv.   forest conservation goals?

      v.   local community benefit goals?

5)   What federal, state, or local-level policies or programs would help this community forest better achieve the conservation and community benefit goals that are important to you/your organization?

6)   What are some key lessons learned that you would share with others interested in establishing a community forest?

7)   Do you have anything additional that you'd like to say before we conclude the interview?

8)   Are there other people affiliated or involved with this community forest who you would recommend we interview for this study?

9)   Would you like to ask me any questions before we conclude the interview?

10)   Would you like us to keep you posted on research progress and results?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCAL FOR NON-AFFILATED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Purpose of interview
To learn about the community forest and its history, management, and governance; and how the community forest contributes to both forest conservation and rural prosperity.
To identify factors that support success in contributing to conservation and rural prosperity; and to identify barriers to success, and policies/programs that might help overcome these barriers.
Explain confidentiality around interview data and how we will use the interview data
Informed consent to participate
Willingness to be recorded
Willingness to be anonymously quoted
Name of community forest:
I. General introduction
I'd like to start by learning a bit about you.
1)   How long have you lived in this area?
2)   What kind of work do (or did) you do here?
3)   When we use the word "community" in relation to the community forest, what is the community that you think of or refer to? (geographic, interest-based)
      i.   Do you consider yourself to be part of that community?
      a.   How long have you been in this community?
4)   What do you consider to be the defining characteristics of a "community forest," as opposed to a forest not owned and managed by the community? (e.g., national, state, county, or town forest; recreation area or park; private corporate forest)

II. Relationship with/to the community forest
Now I'd like to discuss your relationship to the community forest.
1)   How did you become aware of the community forest?
2)   How do you interact with the community forest?
      i.   How do you use the community forest? How long have you been doing that?
      ii.   Do you participate in any of the community forest events? If yes, which ones? How often?
3)   Do you feel like you have a say in how the community forest is managed?
      i.   Are there opportunities that you are aware of to provide input into management decision-making? (meetings, informal conversations)
      ii.   Do you take advantage of those opportunities?
      iii.   How often do you attend meetings that are open to the public?
      iv.   Do you think that the decision-making process is transparent?
      v.   Who is usually present at meetings?
      vi.   Are there any particular groups who do not come to meetings/are left out of the decision making process?

vii.   Is information about the community forest easy to access?

viii.   Are opportunities for involvement with the community forest advertised (volunteer or job opportunities, or ways to learn about what is happening at the CF)

4) How well do you think that your interests are represented by the governing body of the community forest?

i.   Do you feel that your voice is valued?

5) How involved do you think others in your community are in engaging with the community forest?

i.   Do you think the diverse interests of community members are represented?

ii.   Which populations are not engaged or have interests that are left out of decision-making?

6) Are there changes you'd like to see in the current decision-making process about this community forest? (i.e., does the current structure have drawbacks?) If yes, what are they, and why?

IV. Forest management

One important focus of our study is to better understand how a community forest contributes to forest conservation and ecosystem health.

1) What are the forest conservation and ecosystem health goals that you would like to see the community forest contribute to?

2) What are the main threats to the conservation and health of this community forest?

i.   Environmental threats (e.g., fire, climate change, insects, invasive spp., disease)

ii.   Human threats (e.g., neighboring land uses, WUI development, forest users)

3) How well do you think that management of the community forest:

i.   is addressing these threats?

ii.   is achieving the conservation goals you care about?

4) How has the community forest influenced forest management by other forest owners in the area, if at all?

V. Contributions to rural prosperity

Another important focus of our study is to better understand how a community forest creates local community benefits.

1) How has the community forest benefitted you?

2) What would you say are the most important benefits (~top 3) that the community receives from this CF?

3) I'd like to understand the range of community benefits from the community forest. To do this we have prepared a table that we can talk through together. The table lists a number of

ways in which communities potentially benefit from community forests. They may or may not all be relevant here, and some benefits may be missing, feel free to add.

    i.   What are the main community benefits created by this community forest? Please describe.

    ii.   For each, can you estimate how much was produced or used in calendar year 2021, if quantifiable? If not, was the benefit low, medium, or high?

    iii.   Who are the main beneficiaries (could be individuals, businesses, clubs, other organizations), and are they local or non-local?

    iv.   Would you say only a few people benefit from each item, a medium number benefit, many people benefit, or everyone benefits?

[Note]: Both interviewer and interviewee should have a paper copy of the table on the next page so that they can talk through it together. Use the table as a prompting tool; no need to talk about each specific benefit or to fill in every box.

4)   Are there some community members that benefit more from the community forest than others? That benefit less? Are excluded? Please explain.

    i.   Do you think you are receiving the same benefits as others?

    ii.   Do you feel encouraged to make use of the forest?

    iii.   Is everyone encouraged to make use of or enjoy the community forest?

1)   In what ways would you like to see the community forest benefit the local community more broadly?

Benefit	Describe benefit	Quantity or L-M-H	Who benefits, local/nonlocal	# Beneficiaries few-many-all
Timber				
Other wood products (i.e., firewood, biomass)				
Non-timber forest products				
Hunting, fishing, trapping				
Recreation: non-motorized (e.g., hiking, camping)				

Recreation: motorized (e.g., ATVs, snowmobiles)				
Jobs/employment				
Local businesses				
Environmental education				
Cultural resources				
Scenic value				
Sense of place				
Religious/ spiritual				
Partnerships/ relationships				
Community cohesion				

VI. Wrap Up!

1) What are the relative advantages of managing this forestland as a community forest, relative to other models or approaches? (e.g., national, state, county, or town forest; private corporate forest)

2) What are the relative disadvantages?

3) What are some key enabling factors that have helped the community forest achieve its goals relating to
   i. forest conservation?
   ii. creating local community benefits?

4) What have been some challenges to achieving
   i. forest conservation goals?
   ii. local community benefit goals?

5) What are some key lessons learned that you would share with others interested in establishing a community forest?

6) Do you have anything additional that you'd like to say before we conclude the interview?

7) Are there other people affiliated or involved with this community forest who you would recommend we interview for this study?

8) Would you like to ask me any questions before we conclude the interview?

9)   Would you like us to keep you posted on research progress and results?

APPINDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTION AND DIMENSIONS

1) INTERVIEW PROTOCAL FOR MANAGERS, LEADERSHIP, AND OWNERS

Equity dimension	Associated interview questions
Procedural equity	Please describe the main governing or decision-making body(ies) for the community forest. What is the composition of this entity? i. Positions ii. Community vs non-community residents serving in these positions iii. Current gender composition of people serving in these positions iv. Does the makeup of the governing body generally reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the surrounding community? v. Whose interests do these members represent, if selected with this in mind? Are there specific requirements that influence the composition of the governing body? What is the process by which someone becomes a member of this governing body? How long do members serve for? How has the composition of the governing body changed over time? Are members compensated? How are program and budget decisions made? i. Please describe your decision-making process

	ii. How do you handle day to day decisions? Long term? iii. Do you decide by majority vote vs. consensus vs. other? iv. Do you consider these processes open and transparent? v. Are meeting, budget, and audit documents posted for community members to access? vi. How are conflicts addressed in meetings? How are they resolved? How would you characterize the relationship between the governing body and the organization that is responsible for community forest management (e.g., CEO/staff)? Can you describe what a typical meeting is like? i. When and where do they take place? How do you gather input on forest management decisions from the broader community? i. Are your meetings open to the public? Are meetings advertised to the community? Are people aware of them happening? If so, how are they advertised? Who is encouraged to attend? ii. How often do they occur? iii. How many people generally attend? iv. Who is usually present at meetings? Who is not present at meetings? Why do you think that is? v. Are there particular groups who do not come? Is there a historical context that might impact this group's ability to participate?

	vi. What other mechanisms are available for providing public input? vii. Has public participation decreased, remained stable, or increased over time? viii. How do you use community input? Examples? How are decisions made public? i. Are meeting minutes publicly available? ii. Where, e.g., in the office or on the web site? How would you characterize the representativeness of the broader community in terms of their engagement in decision making for this community forest? i. Are there populations that are not engaged or are left out of decision-making? ii. Whose interests aren't included? Do you have a public outreach program? Please describe. i. Are there strategies you are using to try and specifically engage under-represented groups? If you are involved in the governance of other forests in your local area, how does governance of this community forest compare/contrast with the other models you are involved with? Are there changes you'd like to see in the current governance structure or processes associated with making decisions about this community forest? (i.e., does the current structure have drawbacks?) If yes, what are they, and why?

Distributive equity	Does this community forest have goals directly focused on contributing to rural prosperity by creating local community benefits? I'd like to understand how the community benefits from the community forest, and to quantify these benefits to the extent possible. I'd also like to know who benefits. So, what are the main community benefits created by this community forest? When discussing each one, please: i. describe each ii. estimate how much was produced or used in calendar year 2021, if quantifiable iii. characterize who the main beneficiaries are (could be individuals, businesses, clubs, other organizations), and whether they are local or non-local Are there some community members that benefit more from the community forest than others? That benefit less? Are excluded? Please explain. i. Is there a historical context that might impact this group's ability to access benefits? ii. Are there programs in place to include those who might otherwise be left out (marginalized groups)? iii. Is everyone encouraged to make use of or enjoy the community forest? What does this encouragement or advertisement look like? iv. Are there specific activities that the community forest is pursuing to make sure that the benefits are distributed equitably? What does this look like?

	v. Is there a protocol or process for deciding who gets access to certain benefits? If so, what does this look like? vi. Where is the community forest located in relation to the community? Is it easy for all community members to access? vii. Are opportunities for involvement with the community forest advertised? viii. If so, how are they advertised? Are there costs associated with accessing or using the community forest? (i.e. a parking fee, and entrance fee, etc. if recreation is one of the benefits) i. Do these costs impact some community members more than others?

2) INTERVIEW PROTOCAL FOR NON-AFFILATED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Equity dimension	Associated interview questions
Procedural equity	Does your organization play a role in decision-making about management of the community forest? i. If yes, please describe. If no, please explain why not. ii. How do you provide input into management decision-making? iii. How often do you attend meetings that are open to the public? iv. Do you think that the decision-making process is transparent? i. Are there certain individuals, or a group, who lead the meetings? If so, who are they? How do they interact with other community members? ii. Who is usually present at meetings? iii. Who in the community is not present at meetings? Why do you think that is? iv. Are there other ways that you are able to voice your opinions or concerns about the community forest? [for example, written inputs, phone calls] v. Do you feel that your voice is valued? vi. Do you find information about the community forest to be easy to access? vii. Are opportunities for involvement with the community forest advertised? (Volunteer opportunities, or ways to learn about what is happening at the community forest). If so, how are they advertised? How well do you think that the interests of your organization are represented by the governing body of the community forest?

	How involved is the community in engaging with the community forest?
	i. Do you think the diverse interests of community members are well-represented in decision-making?
	ii. Which populations are not engaged or have interests that are left out of decision-making?
	Are there changes you'd like to see in the current governance structure or processes associated with making decisions about this community forest? (i.e., does the current structure have drawbacks?) If yes, what are they, and why?
Distributive equity	How has the community forest benefitted you/your organization/people affiliated with your organization?
	What would you say are the most important benefits (~top 3) that the community receives from this CF?
	I'd like to understand the range of community benefits from the community forest. To do this we have prepared a table that we can talk through together. The table lists a number of ways in which communities potentially benefit from community forests. They may or may not all be relevant here, and some benefits may be missing, feel free to add.
	i. What are the main community benefits created by this community forest? Please describe.
	ii. For each, can you estimate how much was produced or used in calendar year 2021,

	if quantifiable? If not, was the benefit low, medium, or high?
	iii. Who are the main beneficiaries (could be individuals, businesses, clubs, other organizations), and are they local or non-local?
	iv. Would you say only a few people benefit from each item, a medium number benefit, many people benefit, or everyone benefits?
	Are there some community members that benefit more from the community forest than others? That benefit less? Are excluded? Please explain.
	i. Are there programs in place to include those who might otherwise be left out?
	ii. Is everyone encouraged to make use of or enjoy the community forest? What does this encouragement or advertisement look like?
	iii. Are there specific activities that the community forest is pursuing to make sure that the benefits are distributed equitably? What does this look like?
	iv. Is there a protocol or process for deciding who gets access to certain benefits? If so, what does this look like?
	v. Is it easy for all community members to access?
	vi. Are opportunities for involvement with the community forest advertised?
	i. If so, how are they advertised?
	Are there costs associated with accessing or using the community forest? (i.e. a parking fee, and entrance fee, etc. if recreation is one of the benefits)

	i. Do these costs impact some community members more than others? In what ways would you like to see the community forest benefit the local community more broadly?

3) INTERVIEW PROTOCAL FOR NON-AFFILATED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Equity dimension	Associated interview questions
Procedural equity	How did you become aware of the community forest?
	How do you interact with the community forest?
	i. How do you use the community forest? How long have you been doing that?
	ii. Do you participate in any of the community forest events? If yes, which ones? How often?
	Do you feel like you have a say in how the community forest is managed?
	i. Are there opportunities that you are aware of to provide input into management decision-making? (meetings, informal conversations)
	ii. Do you take advantage of those opportunities?
	iii. How often do you attend meetings that are open to the public?
	iv. Do you think that the decision-making process is transparent?
	v. Who is usually present at meetings?
	vi. Are there any particular groups who do not come to meetings/are left out of the decision making process?
	vii. Is information about the community forest easy to access?
	viii. Are opportunities for involvement with the community forest advertised (volunteer or job opportunities, or ways to learn about what is happening at the CF)

	How well do you think that your interests are represented by the governing body of the community forest? i. Do you feel that your voice is valued? How involved do you think others in your community are in engaging with the community forest? i. Do you think the diverse interests of community members are represented? ii. Which populations are not engaged or have interests that are left out of decision-making? Are there changes you'd like to see in the current decision-making process about this community forest? (i.e., does the current structure have drawbacks?) If yes, what are they, and why?
Distributive equity	How has the community forest benefitted you? What would you say are the most important benefits (~top 3) that the community receives from this CF? I'd like to understand the range of community benefits from the community forest. To do this we have prepared a table that we can talk through together. The table lists a number of ways in which communities potentially benefit from community forests. They may or may not all be relevant here, and some benefits may be missing, feel free to add. i. What are the main community benefits created by this community forest? Please describe.

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ii.   For each, can you estimate how much was produced or used in calendar year 2021, if quantifiable? If not, was the benefit low, medium, or high?

iii.   Who are the main beneficiaries (could be individuals, businesses, clubs, other organizations), and are they local or non-local?

iv.   Would you say only a few people benefit from each item, a medium number benefit, many people benefit, or everyone benefits?

Are there some community members that benefit more from the community forest than others? That benefit less? Are excluded? Please explain.

i.   Do you think you are receiving the same benefits as others?

ii.   Do you feel encouraged to make use of the forest?

iii.   Is everyone encouraged to make use of or enjoy the community forest?

In what ways would you like to see the community forest benefit the local community more broadly?

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APPENDIX E: CODEBOOK

Initial Codebook:

Parent Code	Child Code
Governing body	Who leads meetings
	Meeting dynamic
	How are meetings organized/structured
Decision-making	Who is invited
Community involvement	Who participates in meetings
Benefits	Type of benefits
	Distribution of benefits
	Access to benefits
	Distribution of costs
Who is being marginalized	
Community definition	
Actions to address equity	

Adapted Codebook, including emergent codes:

Parent Code	Child Code
Actions to Address Inequity	

Benefits and Access	Access to benefits	
	Costs of CF	
	Distribution of benefits	
	Environmental benefits	
	Socioeconomic benefits	
CF Description	Community Definition	
	CF Description	
Equity	Contextual Equity	
	Distributive Equity	
	Procedural Equity	
	Recognitional Equity	
Governance	Community Involvement	Formal interactions
		Informal interactions
	Decision-making	Formal processes
		Informal processes
		Ultimate decision-making authority
	Governing body	elections
	Managing organization	
	voice	
	Who is there	
Who is marginalized		
Partnerships and innovations		
Want to know from others		
Forest management		
Financial		
CF Vision		
CF generally and lessons for others		