

APPLEGATE PARTNERSHIP

Applegate, Oregon

The Applegate Partnership provides a community-based, grassroots approach to working with the ecological and economic issues that affect all members of the Applegate River watershed region. Its overarching goal is to promote ecosystem health and diversity and a strong, sustainable economy.

The Applegate River watershed encompasses an area of 500,000 acres in Jackson and Josephine counties in southern Oregon, and Siskiyou County in California. Sixty-nine percent of the land is publicly owned, and thirty-one percent is held in private ownership. There are about 7,000 households in the area, with 12,000 residents. There are towns, but no incorporated communities, in the local area. The region's major industry is forestry and forestry products.

The Applegate Partnership's mission statement clearly defines its participants, its ecological and economic mission and its methods for carrying it out:

The Applegate Partnership is a community-based project involving industry, conservation groups, natural resource agencies and residents cooperating to encourage and facilitate the use of natural resource principles that promote ecosystem health and diversity.

Through community involvement and education, this partnership supports management of all land within the [Applegate] watershed in a manner that sustains natural resources and that will, in turn, contribute to the economic and community well-being within the Applegate Valley.

History

The Applegate Partnership was founded in October 1992, when a group of environmentalists, timber industry representatives, federal agency land managers, farmers, ranchers, and community representatives, gathered to discuss their common views about how the forests of the area should be managed. They shared a mutual desire to formulate a local solution that could address both the ecological and economic issues over which they had been fighting. Until that time, environmental activists and the forest products community had been involved for two

decades in a continuing conflict over management of the region's public forest lands.

Managing for healthy forests was something every one could agree on. Forest health brought the Partnership members together because they all wanted healthy, resilient forest ecosystems.

The Applegate Partnership

The Applegate Partnership is run by a board of directors and alternates that include representatives of the North Applegate Watershed Protection Association, the Rogue Institute for Ecology and Economy, the Applegate Watershed Conservancy, the Southern Oregon Timber Industry Association, Southern Oregon State College, the Farm Bureau, and Thompson Creek Residents for Ecological Education (TREE), as well as one timber company and an independent logger and farmer. Representatives of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the United States Forest Service were members of the board but became inactive as board members after objections that their participation violated the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

The Applegate Partnership began meeting four times a month on Wednesdays. These meetings continue, two Wednesday evenings and two Wednesday mornings each month.

The organization is not hierarchical and has no permanent paid staff. It does not intend to exist beyond several more years. There are no acting officers and no chairperson. Conveners of the meetings, who rotate every meeting, help facilitate the meetings. From the beginning, the idea of the organization was to provide a setting in which people, who usually fought with one another, could work together. They found that members generally agree on about eighty percent of the land use issues. As a result of working together, they have learned to regard each other as decent people, not enemies.

Model for AMAs

The idea of the Partnership was greeted with great enthusiasm by those concerned with the battles between environmentalists and producers in timber regions. In developing President Clinton's Forest Plan, the Department of the Interior cited the Applegate Partnership's process as a model for other forest-based communities. Under the Forest Plan, ten Adaptive Management Areas (AMAs) have been established in the west as sites for experimentation with the kind of substantive community participation in forest management planning that the

Partnership exemplifies.

The Partnership experienced an adjustment in its participation, when one of the regional environmental groups withdrew, because of the Partnership's links to the AMAs. Some environmental groups see the AMAs as fronts for those who want an increased timber harvest. Following this, representatives of the federal agencies were ordered not to take part in the partnership meetings, because of the Federal Advisory Committee Act which requires that the agencies control any such meetings.

The Partnership, however, continued to meet regularly and overcame the setbacks. The federal government appointed an inter-agency liaison to attend the meetings. The environmental group that withdrew still continues to work with the Partnership on projects. And, the Partnership has increased its base of local support by dealing with a number of important local issues.

Funding the Partnership

An important part of the Applegate Partnership's activity is the Applegate Watershed Council. The board members of the Applegate Partnership along with other interested community members are members of the council. State lottery money is disbursed through the Watershed Councils in Oregon to be used for restoration activities in watershed areas. The Applegate Watershed Council has received almost \$500,000 in lottery money for various restoration projects. The money also funds the Applegate Partnership newsletter, *Applegator*, published six times a year. And it pays for people to supervise some of the projects.

The Partnership is applying for non-profit status. Since it formed, funds received have been funnelled through organizations represented in the Partnership that have non-profit status. The Partnership now is in the process of applying for project-specific funds from federal, state and private sources.

Applegate Partnership Projects

The Partnership has a number of on-going projects that build on local cooperation to provide for environmental, economic and social needs. A number of the projects are funded for the next two or three years. Projects include:

- providing for irrigation ditch projects such as headgates that improve agricultural capability and fisheries habitat restoration;
- improving access roads to reduce soil erosion; and

- providing free fencing for anyone who needs it to protect riparian habitat.

In the spring of 1995, the Partnership provided 60,000 trees that were planted on 140 individual properties. Several people were paid for part time work to supervise the project. Five-hundred volunteers did the planting. That project will continue in the spring and fall for the next two years.

Other opportunities for the timber industry, environmental groups, agencies and universities to work together have resulted in cooperative stream surveys, and watershed planning and integration using Geographic Information System mapping. In Summer 1996, the Partnership plans to employ 40 high school students at about \$7 to \$8 an hour to do projects in conjunction with a watershed-wide fuels reduction / fire management plan in which the Partnership, the BLM, the U.S. Forest Service, State Forestry, and private land holders are participating.

The Applegate Partnership also participates in a group called the Lead Partnership, a coalition of ten watershed groups similar to the Partnership. Representatives from the groups meet bi-monthly to discuss issues in common and, with the help of the Irvine Foundation, are organizing a summit (to be held October 6-7, 1995) to bring together national environmental and timber organizations to talk about how the communities of place can work with the communities of interest.

Commitment Key to success

Several key elements have led to the Applegate Partnership's success. One is that the group meets four times every month to ensure that as many people as possible have a chance to participate and make their concerns and ideas a part of the solution. In fact, anyone attending any meeting is encouraged to participate in the entire process. People with strong positions on any given issue are often asked to chair a sub-committee to develop solutions. Another is the refusal to establish a normal hierarchical organization so all participants have equal status, an important consideration in maintaining relationships between people with strongly opposing views. And finally, as one member says, "The Partnership is not for the faint of heart. Luckily we have had a group of people who are just too stubborn to give up. It's an extremely committed group."

—Community Sustainability Resource Institute

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Scope: Regional, rural
Inception Date: 1992
Participants: Residents, industries, local, state and national natural resource agencies, environmental organizations, and ranching and farming community
Project type: Natural resource conservation/management, economic development, citizen-led initiative
Methods used: Consensus meetings, newsletters, projects
Lessons learned: Building a sense of community is extremely important. Identifying fundamental points of agreement can foster dialogue, cooperation and community. Giving participants equal footing to discuss problems keeps people at the negotiating table.



UPDATE

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The Applegate Partnership continues to be very active and is credited by its supporters with being very successful in finding common ground between local citizens, environmentalists, and commercial interests. The Partnership was successful in applying for non-profit status. Their current budget is about \$300,000, primarily for watershed restoration projects. State funds have been provided by the Governor's Watershed Enhancement Board, the Land Conservation and Development Commission, and the

Department of Environmental Quality. Other funds have been provided by various federal agencies and foundations. Although it was mentioned earlier that there was a "sunset" provision in the Partnership charter, the current bylaws for the Partnership do not contain such a provision.

The Partnership still holds meetings every Wednesday to discuss matters related to forestry, salmon recovery, and water quality in the Applegate area. Attendance continues to be very high and diverse. Questions about local issues arise on a regular basis and are generally resolved amicably. An environmental group called Headwaters, for example, dropped a legal challenge to timber sales, in exchange for an agreement that greater care would be taken in selecting and harvesting timber, and for an opportunity to monitor the marketing of the trees.

The Partnership continues its forestry preservation efforts. Local high school students and other volunteers have planted more than 250,000 trees on 300 properties. The State of Oregon funded a small pilot project with private landowners to clean up and thin forest areas for the purpose of reducing fire hazards. This stimulated the BLM to consider an expanded program, which would, for the first time, coordinate fire hazard reduction methods on BLM and privately-owned land.

The Partnership recently joined a coalition to take over management of the 80-acre Cantrall Buckley Park in Jackson County, regarded a financial burden by the local governments. With a number of enhancements, a continuing system of modest user fees, and some foundation support, the park is now nearly self-sustaining.

The Partnership has also been actively involved in a research project, sponsored by Oregon State University, to develop a forest management simulation model. This model will be used to predict and evaluate the impacts of different alternative forest management strategies.

The Partnership's education and outreach efforts are also continuing. Their newsletter, the *Applegator*, has a circulation of around 10,000, including 7,000 local households and 3,000 absentee land owners. Representatives from the Partnership also participated in a conference on sustainable communities, under the sponsorship of the Northwest Area Foundation. The major challenge for the Partnership is to continue its cooperative activities.

—Community Sustainability Resource Institute