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# **Balancing Communities, Economies, and the Environment in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem**

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## **Abstract:**

Balancing the needs of local communities, their economies, and associated natural resources is critical to the long-term success of individual communities and larger regions and ecosystems. This is especially true in mountain communities which are increasingly susceptible to land use and land cover changes, and where limited knowledge exists relating to these interactions and the perceptions of local stakeholders and decision makers. The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE), centered on Yellowstone National Park and extending through parts of Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho, is an ideal location to study the interrelations of economic growth and environmental protection due to the region's complex mosaic of private and public lands, competing natural resource uses, and rapid population growth. The objective of this study was to determine how residents of three communities within the GYE perceive, prioritize, and act upon issues of sustainability community development and natural resource management through key informant interviews.

Keywords: sustainability, social-ecological systems, decision-making, perceptions, Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem

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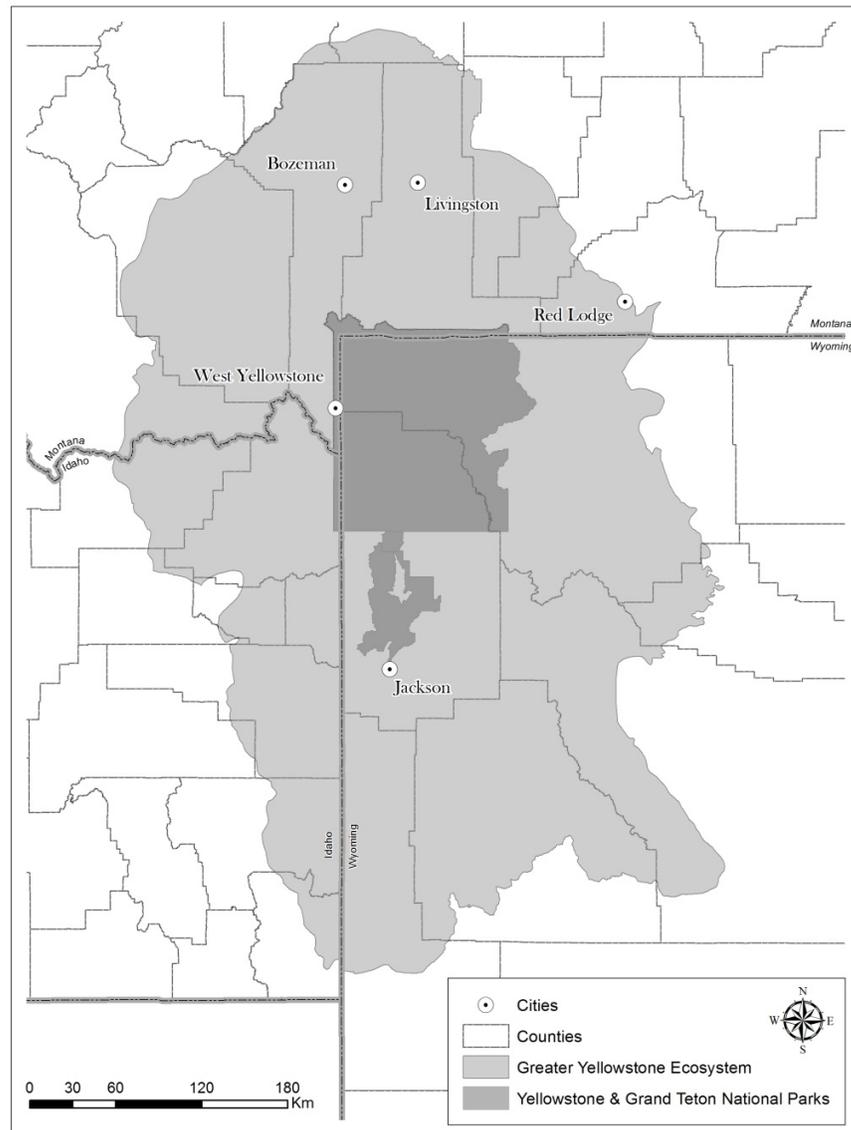
## **1.0 Introduction**

The three E's (environment, economy, and equity), the three P's (people, profit, and planet), the triple bottom line, and a host of other terms and phrases have been used to describe the basic principles and ideas of sustainability. While these concepts originated in the business world (Elkington, 1997), they have been re-appropriated to reflect global, regional, and local initiatives (Slaper & Hall, 2011) to balance the economy, the environment, and the communities that depend on each. While numerous definitions exist for the term sustainability, the need to balance economies, communities, and their adjacent environments is implicit in these definitions. However, creating an appropriate balance, and differing views on the trade-offs that are necessary, are poorly understood at the community level.

Communities in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) (See Figure 1), recognizing the need for equilibrium, have adopted the goal of sustainability and have incorporated sustainability concepts into their comprehensive and growth plans. However, conversations with decision makers in the region have revealed the

difficulties of balancing the triple bottom line in a highly dynamic environment, where communities strive for cohesion, where families must be fed, and where tourists must be housed, fed, and entertained. Thus, balancing the triple bottom line has proven much more difficult than community plans may suggest. It might be assumed that communities united by a relatively intact ecosystem, like those in the GYE, would share common goals and perceptions. However, not only do communities lack cohesive goals and perceptions, but they often do not understand the complexities that neighboring communities face.

*Figure 1: The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.*



Source: Big Sky Institute, 2012

The primary objective of the research reviewed in this chapter was to determine how communities in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem perceive, prioritize and act upon issues of sustainability (Bergstrom, 2009; Bergstrom & Harrington, 2011),

specifically the balancing of local economies, community development and the environment. It is critical to have a clear understanding of the varying conceptualizations of sustainability within a given community, as ambiguity in definitions may lead to differing planning processes and outcomes. To better understand perceptions within the study area, key-informant interviews were conducted with decision-makers and stakeholders.

## 2.0 The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem

To the wildlife biologist, the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is defined by the habitat of the grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*). To the geologist, it consists of the 24 conterminous mountain ranges that surround Yellowstone National Park (Pierce et al., 2007). To those who study the socio-economic character of the region, the GYE is defined by the 20 counties that surround Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks (Gude et al., 2006). Beyond these definitions, nearly 30 local, state, and federal agencies charged with managing the region, have their own definitions of what constitutes the GYE. Thus, the GYE is a theoretical, vernacular, or conceptual region, defined by numerous groups, decision makers, and stakeholders.

This study uses the socio-economic working definition of Gude et al. (2006), where the GYE consists of 20 counties spread over portions of three states (Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming). The 20 million acres that constitute the GYE include 2.5 million acres managed by the National Park Service (Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks), seven National Forests covering 11 million acres, and 1.5 million acres managed by state and tribal agencies.

Gateway communities within the GYE possess many of the qualities that new migrants seek, including high environmental quality, numerous recreational opportunities, and cultural amenities (Howe et al., 1997). National park and national forest gateways demonstrate change and stresses related to population growth, social and economic change, and environmental connections, or characteristics that may lead to particular concerns with sustainability. The communities of West Yellowstone and Red Lodge, Montana, and Jackson, Wyoming (See Figure 1), were chosen as study sites for these reasons, and because they exhibit a variety of unique social characteristics (See Table 1).

Table 1. *Study Community Socio-Economic Characteristics*

<b>Community</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Median Income</b>	<b>Median Home Value</b>	<b>% Below Poverty</b>
West				
Yellowstone	1,502	\$39,231	\$272,800	17.6
Red Lodge	2,307	\$50,123	\$181,300	13.6
Jackson	9,564	\$58,027	\$556,700	4.3

### 2.1 West Yellowstone, Montana

The town of West Yellowstone is located at the western border of Yellowstone National Park. The town is a landlocked community. To the east lies Yellowstone National Park, to the north Gallatin National Forest, to the west Beaverhead National Forest, and to the south Targhee-Caribou National Forest. These national forests and national parks extend to the city limits, and thus in order for the community to

expand spatially, land must be acquired from federal agencies. Because of its isolated nature, the town relies almost entirely on Park visitation and related recreational activities as its sole sources of economic activity.

Gallatin County, Montana (6749 km<sup>2</sup>) of which West Yellowstone is a part, has continually been the state's fastest growing county, with an overall population increase of 30 percent per decade from 1970 through 1999, and an increase of 14.5 percent between 2000 and 2005 (Compas, 2007). The primary industry is retail trade, but accommodations and food services also rank relatively high due to the large tourism industry based on winter recreational activities, and the county's close proximity to Yellowstone National Park. Agriculture also is important to the county, which is the state's top producer of alfalfa hay; at one time it was a key source of canning peas nationwide, a tradition celebrated annually with the Sweet Pea Festival in August (MDLI, 2005; Merrill & Jacobson, 1997).

## ***2.2 Red Lodge, Montana***

Red Lodge is geographically constrained by the Yellowstone River to the north, the Pryor Mountains and Big Horn River to the east, and the Beartooth and Absaroka Mountain Ranges to the south and west. When the region was opened to white settlers in 1882, migrants focused their attention on the vast forests along the Beartooth Front, farming the lands immediately adjacent to Rock Creek. More important than the forested hillsides were the rich coal deposits found nearby, in the vicinities of Washoe, Bear Creek, and Joliet. By the 1930s, mining operations near Red Lodge expanded across the Beartooth Mountains to Cooke City, Montana, at the edge of Yellowstone National Park. To connect the mining areas and provide local merchants with a connection to the lucrative tourism industry in Yellowstone National Park, the Beartooth Highway was constructed through the Park Approach Act in 1936. Mining in the Red Lodge area ended in 1953 when the Montana Coal and Iron Company, following the death of 74 workers in 1943, closed the Smith Mine. By the end of the 1970s, the county had experienced population decline, especially in relation to agriculture, but tourism and expanded services at the local ski resort, Red Lodge Mountain, brought the first wave of amenity migrants to the area. A significant number of the homes in the community are vacation and second homes (Guarino, 2000).

Red Lodge is the county seat of Carbon County, which is dominated by the agricultural (15.4 percent of all employees), and service (16.7 percent) industries (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Between 1970 and 2009, Red Lodge experienced only moderate growth, in comparison to other communities in the region (29 percent, overall). The extraction of natural resources has traditionally dominated economic activity, but in recent decades, amenity migration and tourism have resulted in a shift to service-oriented industries, including accommodations and food services (23 percent of all employees), and retail trade (13 percent). Income from agriculture, a dominant industry in previous decades, has declined by nearly 25 percent since 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). However, the total land area farmed has increased by five percent, largely as the result of corporate acquisitions.

## ***2.3 Jackson, Wyoming***

Jackson is located at the southern end of Grand Teton National Park. The town, which today is dominated by the tourism industry, was first settled due to the valley's rich agricultural lands and abundant big game (Daughery, 1999). Tourism in the

valley did not begin until the 1910s, when Struthers Burt purchased 640 acres through the Desert Land Act to form the Bar BC Dude Ranch. The ranch provided customers with western experiences including horseback riding, pack trips, and hunting and fishing expeditions in a scenic mountain environment. Early dude ranchers and cattlemen, with the help of John D. Rockefeller, realized the importance of conserving the natural environment to protect it from commercial exploitation and in the process established Grand Teton National Monument, which later became a National Park.

Jackson is located in Teton County, which is dominated by the entertainment and recreation (23.7 percent of all employees) and service industries (21 percent). Since 1970, Teton County has experienced considerable growth (256 percent), with over 100 percent increase in out-of-state migration in the last year alone. Accompanying this tremendous growth are increases in high-income housing (homes over US \$500,000), with a 318 percent increase since 2000. This growth in high value housing has largely been attributed to amenity migration. According to the Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce (2011), Jackson saw significant declines in tourist visitation rates (Grand Teton National Park -47%, Yellowstone National Park -13%), lodging occupancy rates (-20%), and construction permits (-33%) in the past several years, indicating that the rapid population growth and tourist boom that began in the late 1970s may be coming to a close.

### **3.0 Sustainability and the Triple Bottom Line**

At the core of the concept of sustainability is the idea that society must reconcile social and economic goals with the natural limits of the environment (Clark & Dickson, 2003). Generally, sustainable development implies simultaneous attention to all three broad spheres of sustainability (environment, society, economy) and their perpetuation into the future (WCED, 1987; Maxey, 2006). An understanding of the coupled and complex relationship between these three components is critical for rural resource managers, and the scientific community as a whole. While traditionally these concepts were considered separately, researchers from disparate disciplines have begun to realize the importance of a coupled systems approach. Because of the inherent interconnectedness of these three systems, slight deviations or perturbations in one system has the potential to dramatically alter each of the others.

Goals related to sustainability are highly normative and derive from social consensus (Kates, 2000; Parris & Kates, 2003). Kemp and Martens (2007) suggest that, due to the normative and subjective nature of approaches to sustainability, solutions tend to be applicable for specific regions but not the whole of society. It is imperative that the perceptions and experiences of local communities regarding their environment be documented (Volker, 1997; Rudzitis, 1999), along with the ways in which these perceptions are prioritized and acted upon. Not only will greater understanding of such perceptions and experiences add to our understanding of nature-society relations, but in specific contexts this understanding may help to promote realistic and effective decision-making in relation to sustainability.

### **4.0 Methods**

The key informant technique is an ethnographic research method designed to better understand the opinions and beliefs of community members who may have specialized knowledge of the subject under examination as result of their position

within a community (Rubin & Babbie, 2009; Marshall, 1996). Because the key informant technique is based in ethnography, it is particularly well suited to the study of societal problems, their patterns, and their causes. The approach allows patterns to be linked to local, regional, national, and global socio-economic and socio-political structures. Knowledge of patterns and connections may then be utilized to provide beneficial plans and actions for local communities as they relate to the subject under examination (LeCompte et al., 1999). For this study, key informant interviews allowed for an increased understanding of local perceptions, priorities, and goals related to the concept of sustainability, as well as the power and influences that are most prevalent within each community.

Semi-structured interviews with local government officials (mayors, city council members, operations managers, and planning and zoning commission members), local and regional non-governmental organization officials, and local business owners and operators (of hotels/motels, bars/restaurants, recreational guide services) were performed between May 2010 and August 2010. Approximately 10 interviews were conducted in each of the study communities, with a total of 32 overall (See Table 2). Interviews touched on a number of subjects relevant to sustainability, including local issues, perceptions, and priorities, but for the purposes of this chapter, the key question of interest addressed whether respondents felt that environment, economy, and community sustainability interests are balanced in their respective communities and, if not, what element is prioritized. While 32 interviewee responses were recorded, only 24 of the original 32 key-informants responded specifically to the questions related to the balancing of the triple bottom line.

Table 2. *Key Informant Interview Demographics*

	<b>Total</b>	<b>City, County Government</b>	<b>Business Owner</b>	<b>NGO</b>	<b>Average Time in Residence</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Red Lodge</b>	10	4	2	3	19	7	3
<b>Jackson</b>	9	7	0	2	16	6	3
<b>West Yellowstone</b>	10	2	6	2	34	8	2
<b>Outside Study Area</b>	3	0	0	3	25	2	1
<b>Total</b>	32	13	8	10	23.5	23	9

Content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980, 2004), or discourse analysis, of key informant interview transcripts was conducted to qualitatively assess perceptions regarding the idea of sustainability in the GYE. Transcripts were coded for content, as well as for specific interview questions. Coding and inference consisted of reading each interview transcript individually and determining which pre-determined topical categories (community development, conservation, economic development, natural resources, and sustainability) were most applicable to the ideas presented by the respondent. ATLAS.ti 6.2, which allows for the qualitative analysis of unstructured textual data, was used for coding.

## 5.0 Results and Discussion

When considering the three study communities collectively (N=31), 38 percent of respondents felt that the environment, economy, and community receive equal prioritization, reflecting a balanced triple-bottom-line (note that totals add to more than 100 percent because respondents sometimes expressed multiple sustainability priorities) (See Table 3). However, 33 percent of respondents felt that the local economy is given the highest priority, while 17 percent felt it is the environment. Only four percent of respondents agreed that local community development received the highest priority. Of particular note was the recognition (21 percent) that balance and prioritization varied. Variations in priorities were focused on two temporal scales, seasonal and annual. Annual variations were largely the result of changing economic conditions at the national and global scales. Larger-scale economic conditions influenced prioritization because of the large dependence on tourism and recreation-based industries inherent in study communities. Seasonal variations were the result of shoulder seasons (October to December and March to May), which are largely dictated by the closing of Yellowstone National Park during the spring and fall. Because issues of sustainability vary spatially and temporally, it is critical to develop a better understanding of the goals, indicators, trends, and driving forces of changes on local scales (Parris & Kates, 2003).

Table 3. *Number of Respondents per Sustainability Priority*

Study Site	Number of Respondents per Priority				
	Environment	Economy	Community	Balanced	Varied
West Yellowstone, MT ( <i>n</i> = 9)	0	2	0	0	3
Jackson, WY ( <i>n</i> = 9)	2	3	0	3	1
Red Lodge, MT ( <i>n</i> =13)	2	3	1	6	1
Total	4	8	1	9	5

### 5.1 West Yellowstone, Montana

In West Yellowstone, which is almost entirely dependent on park visitation rates, the top priority was given as the local economy (two of 9 respondents), with a third of respondents agreeing that priorities shifted seasonally. Forty-four percent of respondents suggested that while priorities may shift seasonally, the local environment, economy, and community should be balanced. This recognition of equilibrium is significant as it furthers the idea that sustainability is a normative concept, based on what should be, not what is currently possible. A local government official expressed this idea well when he said:

I would think the correct answer would be that they have to be given equal weight. But I think economy is always going to win out. If it's a matter of recycling or money or something like that money is always going to win out. And I'm not sure that's bad. As a town we have to make money, we have to take in money; we have to have a viable economy. If you don't have that then nothing makes any sense. You can recycle all you want, but if you don't have anything to recycle eventually you're nowhere. So the economy has to be a paramount factor, but you know there has to be a way to make it

all work. I mean you know there's plenty of smart people out there that are doing it now. There has to be a way to make it all work.

While some decision makers felt that balance should exist, they also recognized that their dependence on Yellowstone National Park for economic viability often results in a focus on economics. This recognition was noted by several decision makers, including a business owner who stated:

In a community like West Yellowstone that is so totally impacted by federal land, our ability to exist is based on the fabulousness of Yellowstone National Park on one hand, and on the other hand the opportunities — the additional recreational opportunities — that are offered through the national forest. So, those are the...current and past cornerstones of the economics of the community.

Several key informants also noted the unique challenges present in communities that are dependent on tourism and recreation-based industries. A local business owner suggested:

I think we are especially vulnerable to putting one above the other [environment, economy, community]. We have to acknowledge that we make our living off the park. The park has to acknowledge that they use our services. I mean if three million people visit Yellowstone National Park, a lot of them are going to have to stay in the gateway communities. It's just the way it is.

Dependence on Yellowstone National Park results in the lack of a year-round economy, which causes prioritization of the triple-bottom-line to vary seasonally. As a local business owner noted:

There are dramatic differences in the weight given to those three factors [environment, economy, and community], whether you are talking about winter, or whether you are talking about summer... I've been in a lot of resort communities, and I have yet to be in one that shows such a dramatic change from what we call warm season to cold season.

## **5.2 Red Lodge, Montana**

For Red Lodge, nearly half of all respondents agreed that balance existed in their community. Three of the thirteen respondents suggested that the economy is the top priority, while two respondents agreed that it is the environment.

Many decision makers in Red Lodge felt that the triple bottom line is currently balanced, although that balance differs both spatially and temporally. Spatially, it was perceived that a balance exists at the community level, while at the county level it does not. As one local government official noted, "I think that they are [balanced triple-bottom-line] in the city of Red Lodge, but I don't think at the county government level they are." A local business owner said:

I think for the most part Red Lodge has...a good handle on those issues. The county, on the other hand, does not. I think the county [is] not as dedicated in guiding growth and maintaining what we have, the

sustainability. Whereas the city over the last couple of decades has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in studies and planning to take care of things within the city limits. But you get to the city limit and it's lost. So, you know there's county versus city when it comes to our region.

Temporally, balance has shifted throughout the community's history. One long-term business owner noted:

I would say 15 years ago, when I moved into this community, that the environment piece was there, but it wasn't talked about in the way that we talk about it now. That does come along with awareness and probably also with the kind of changing demographics, the kind of person who is making this community their home and participating in the life of this community. They've come here because of that natural amenity.

It was suggested that priorities would likely shift again as additional amenity-driven migrants move to the area, and there are growing concerns about their impact on the environment. A local government official stated:

...the next three to five years are really going to test that. Because...the ski area sold three years ago, and I think from a growth standpoint it's the biggest thing to happen to this community in 30 years. And when the economy comes back and they start developing that ski area, that's when we are going to have that growth and it's going to test all three of those. The economy at that point is going to be much better because it is going to bring in business and developers and people spending money. But, boy, the environment, that's going to be a concern at that point in time as to what gets eaten up by development and what stays natural.

Balance also was perceived to be achieved on a longer-term scale (*i.e.* annually), but not on a daily basis. A local business owner felt that balance exists in the community on the large-scale, but it shifts, saying: "From a 20,000 foot view, yeah, I think there is [a balance] with really broad strokes", but that "There is a tradeoff there. It doesn't happen on a daily basis. So the balance isn't on a daily basis, the balance is on an annualized basis." Others felt that a balance did not exist, such as a local business owner who stated:

I think Carbon County has a ways to go before they are balanced. So no, I don't think they are, in this area. I think they're getting there and I think people want it to happen. But I think Carbon County and the Red Lodge area has a ways to go before it's balanced, personally.

Finally, there is a growing recognition of the relationship between the local economy and the environment, and the community's dependence on a healthy and vibrant natural environment. A local NGO official illustrated this by stating:

I think Red Lodge really knows, for the most part — most people really know — that whatever they are doing they depend on the environment for their income. So if they are ranchers, or farmers, or they depend on tourism, it's all based on the environment. So I think they are really aware of how things impact.

### **5.3 Jackson, Wyoming**

In Jackson, three of the nine respondents felt that balance exists within the community, while an additional third of respondents felt the local economy is the top priority. Lastly, two of the nine respondents felt the environment is the highest priority. Those who felt that the economy is taking precedence believed that the primary driving force is the downturn in the national economy. One NGO official noted that when the community began its comprehensive planning process the economy was not a priority because the local economy was strong, but in recent years that had changed:

We started that [comprehensive plan] over two or three years ago, and the economy... was in the back seat, and it was like, 'yeah it's important, but we're so strong, we're never worried about that.' Versus it has flipped upside down on its tail, and it is a big, big deal. The economy and business can stay here and be sustained; versus when we started the conversation, they were secondary.

Others recognized the importance of the tourism industry, and its related sales tax to the community's economy. The sales tax, also known as a visitor's tax, is a six percent sales tax placed on non-essential goods and services that, combined with a two percent lodging tax on hotel rooms, fund a majority of the community's services. As one government official stated:

And then I think economically, for economic sustainability, I guess that might be the leg of the stool that we might not be doing as well at, because we do depend so much on the tourism and the sales tax. The budget for the town, our general fund, is funded 60 percent through sales tax. And so that makes it very difficult for us when tourism is down. And I think that that is always a balance that the community tries to look at is...like how many visitors do we sustain and how many are desirable, and where do we get to the point.

In addition to the tourism and recreation-based industries, some decision makers were concerned that downturns in the local economy would hamper amenity-based migration and second home purchases. One noted:

I think it depends on the year and the season. I think right now because Jackson's such a tourist community...that we were hit later during all these economic problems and maybe hit a little harder because so much of our economic growth is dependent on second homes. That's pretty much gone right now. So a lot of comments that you heard were not as accommodating for looking at environmental issues, it's more economic.

Other decision makers felt that the environment was the top priority of the community. Even when the environment was not seen as the top priority it was felt that the community had been successful in preserving and conserving the natural environment in the face of tremendous growth since the 1970s. A local government official noted:

I can't say that...all three are completely even. But I think for the environment that we have we've done a really good job of preserving our

environment, and our natural resources, and our wildlife corridors, and our view sheds. In order to really do all that at 100 percent we wouldn't be here.

Other government officials noted that while they felt the community balanced the economy, the environment, and community development well, they also suggested that the comprehensive plan had directed the community toward sustainability initiatives. One county official said:

I would say they are fairly balanced. I mean this is a fairly environmentally forward-thinking community. And if you look at the goals of the comprehensive plan, we speak accurately to mode shift. We have a sustainability chapter, we...have a working relationship, an agreement with the power company...to reduce energy consumption. We've reduced our energy consumption by ten percent in our internal organizations over the last couple years. Now we are going to a community wide [program].

This was furthered by the director of a local non-government organization who said:

I think the environment gets...the priority. Definitely in terms...of the comments we hear, and also in terms of the action. I think when it comes down to a decision...we might have to make a trade-off, protecting the environment takes the priority.

However, other respondents felt that while the community had done a good job of including the environment as a top priority in its comprehensive and growth plans, when it came to implementing that priority they had failed:

I would say here we — our — over-arching community guideline is our natural resources: putting those first and foremost, on paper. You know we haven't had a lot of major changes in policy, but our community's commitment towards really going above and beyond, or taking the tough measures and implementing the ideals has definitely taken a back seat. Like, we backed off on some of our goals. Not necessarily still having those goals, but just implementing them.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

The objective of this study was to determine how three amenity-driven communities within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem prioritize elements of the 'triple-bottom-line.' Interpretations and perceptions in the GYE were found to vary spatially due to differing socio-economic characteristics, values, and behaviors of individuals and communities. At the regional level, some individuals perceived their practices as adhering to a balanced triple-bottom-line, while others believed that the environment or the economy received priority. When asked about the prospect of a balanced triple-bottom-line in gateway communities in the GYE, directors of two regional non-government organizations provided two reasons as to why a balance was difficult. First, it was suggested that the demands placed on gateway communities through tourism, recreation, and amenity migration, in conjunction with differing views between communities and the numerous agencies charged with managing the region, resulted in a perpetual state of imbalance. The second reason is the 'love-hate relationship' most communities in the GYE have with regional management

agencies, which results in a unique cultural identity that prevents meaningful collaboration and thus causes imbalance.

At the community level, varied perceptions, similar to those at the regional level, existed. However, unique challenges emerged relating to prioritization and the balancing of the triple- bottom-line. While decision makers and stakeholders in West Yellowstone perceived the economy as receiving the highest priority, they were cognizant of the community's dependence on the natural environment for sustaining livelihoods. Thus, there is some feeling that the triple-bottom-line needs to be balanced in order to sustain the community's way of life. The challenge is how to reach equilibrium in a community that makes the majority of its annual profits during a five-month period. In Red Lodge, there was the perception of a balanced triple-bottom-line. However, the challenge here is the perceived disparity in priorities between the community, which is tourism-based, and the county, which is agriculturally-based. There was also concern that as local, national, and global economies improve, priorities may shift toward economics, tourists, and amenity migrants, with many questioning what impact this shift would have on the local environment. Lastly, in Jackson, perceptions were split between a balanced triple-bottom-line and priority placed on the economy. While it was acknowledged that the city and county had done an adequate job of prioritizing the environment in their comprehensive and growth plans, the challenge is implementation of those priorities. This was a critical concern for many, especially in an economic environment that had seen a decrease in tourist visits and amenity migration, and as a result, a decline in community services funded through tourism dollars.

Balancing the 'triple-bottom-line,' the 'three E's,' or the 'three P's' is a difficult task, especially in communities where economic vitality relies on the natural environment. That the communities of West Yellowstone, Red Lodge, and Jackson have begun to recognize their dependence on the natural world is a step toward a balanced regional triple-bottom-line. However, the implementation of that realization is what is needed most, especially in a region where the natural resources that make the area unique are in such high demand from a myriad decision makers and stakeholders.

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