

Trinity County Supervisor Judy Morris
April 11, 2013 - Testimony
House Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation
RE: Hearing Regarding Restoring Healthy Forests for Healthy Communities Act
and other forest management related items

Chairman Bishop and Honorable Committee Members,

I'm not a lawyer and I'm not a forester, but I am here before you today as a problem solver from a rural forested western county and as a member of the Trinity County, CA Board of Supervisors where I've served since January of 2009.

Trinity is a rural forested county, with 76% of our 2 million acres being managed by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Less than 5% of Trinity County's land mass is suitable, and available for private development. If Trinity County were a state, it would have the 3rd highest percentage of public land, behind Alaska and Nevada.

By necessity, the county must rely on its relationship with the state and federal land and resource management organizations to provide opportunities for economic development.

My hometown is not in Trinity County, or even California. I grew up in Detroit, Michigan. As a child of the Motor City, what was then the automotive production center of the universe, I saw the rise and fall of the American auto industry first hand. I know the value that real jobs can have on a community.

About Trinity County

Through the 19th and most of the 20th century the dependence on public land resources worked out fine, thanks to a rich and colorful history in gold mining, logging, timber products, and ranching that utilized those lands.

However, for a variety of economic and social reasons, including the need for environmental protections, those prosperous days are gone and Trinity County's economic data looks like hundreds of other rural areas across the country, both in privately owned areas like the mid-West and in the public land areas of the West.

There are few places in the west with economies that are more resource dependent and this includes local government. As a public lands community, Trinity County lacks a robust tax base. This further complicates the local government's challenge of providing critical services, such as law enforcement and social services to its far flung citizens.

Stewardship of these resources is imperative not only to the small communities nestled in its mountainous valleys, but to the state and national communities, as critical ecosystem services such as biodiversity, water resources and carbon sequestration are provided by the Trinity forest and its watersheds. Silicon Valley was built on the water and power from places like Trinity County and other rural forested communities in the west.

Success In Collaboration

One of the shining successes from Trinity County has been the Weaverville Community Forest. This 13,000 acre territory comprised of both USFS and BLM managed lands and guided by a collaborative community group and supported by the Stewardship Contracting tool.

Although the economics to date have been small, the trust that has built through the development of this award-winning project is a bankable commodity in and of itself, which will guarantee much faster movement on future projects. I'm proud to say that in 2009 the Community Forest was awarded one of the 2009 Partners In Conservation Awards by then Secretary of Interior Salazar.

Using this model as a springboard, the Trinity County Board of Supervisors has entered into a government to government with our federal agency partners and are working on a "Forest Management 2.0" model and is moving forward with a countywide collaborative with the goal of replicating the success of the Weaverville Community Forest at a countywide scale.

As you know, there are a number of other successful collaborative efforts underway across the west including Idaho's Clearwater Collaborative, Washington's Pinchot Partners and others.

How To Move Forward – Retain and Support What Works

Stewardship Contracting – Currently allows the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to enter into long-term contracts (up to 10 years) to meet land-management objectives (for example, to reduce wildland fire risk and improve forest and rangeland health). The reauthorization of this authority that is expiring in September of this year is crucial to Trinity County's next steps. This has an important tool for our community in our efforts in the Weaverville Community Forest and other projects.

Secure Rural Schools – Until an alternate revenue model is developed, I agree that at least a one year extension is crucial, just to maintain baseline funding for these resource rich / revenue poor counties. Trinity County prides itself that the forest projects that have resulted from current Trinity County Resource Advisory Committee has been one of, if not the most, effective RAC associated with the Secure Rural Schools funding with significant work in fuels reduction and watershed protection and no lawsuits on any project.

Support Collaboration with Tools and Options, including Environmental Protections

Collaboration has worked for Trinity County but only because unique conditions and goals existed.

1. **Multiple Objectives** - We value economic goals and environmental protections
2. **Good Things Take Time** - We know that we're in a marathon, not a sprint
3. **Big Success Is Built On Small Success** - We celebrate successes, like the Weaverville Community Forest, that support our evolving relationship with our federal agency partners

Just as the U.S. auto industry has finally enlisted leadership from executives and innovators from around the world to support their recovery, so must the forested public lands communities across the country.

Be Careful About Going from 0 – 100 mph

As a self-labeled problem solver, I understand that process can be frustrating. However I would caution putting the gas pedal to the floor on a new set of rules (or lack thereof). Focus on what's working and enhance it.

Retaining tools like stewardship contracting is vital but so is recruitment of the scientific community, encouraging natural resource based entrepreneurs and expanding high speed internet infrastructure and renewable energy development.

A New Paradigm Is Needed

Trinity County's forest and water resources must be managed in a manner that will transition society and the ecosystem into a new era. We must shift from seeking to restore to a historical condition, to a new paradigm aimed at managing for realistic and probable future conditions.

Although the conditions for each county, and each set of ecologic challenges will be different, the tools and support mentioned above are a great place to start.

More information on Weaverville Community Forest:

<http://www.tcrd.net/wcf/index.htm>

<http://centerforhealthreporting.org/article/could-other-north-state-communities-follow-example-weaverville-community-forest>

<http://www.redding.com/news/2009/oct/07/timber-group-drops-objections-to-weaverville/?print=1>

More information on Natural Resource Planning in Trinity County, CA:

http://www.mfpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Trinity-County_CA_Forest-and-Water_Climate-Adaptation-Plan_2011.pdf

Trinity County, CA: A Profile

Trinity County, CA has the opportunity to leverage its history of collaborative successes to:

- Create local jobs
- Improve the natural environment
- Reduce the impacts of wildland fire and
- Continue to provide ecosystems services to the state and the nation

These targets can be achieved by working strategically with our federal partners to utilize public lands, existing infrastructure, current technology and science to responsibly manage the national forests within Trinity County.

Where is Trinity County?

Located in far Northern California, Trinity County's land mass is approximately 2 million acres, one and 1/2 the size of the state of Delaware with a population of around 14,000. Trinity County's population has not seen a significant shift in the last 40 years. Trinity County is the only county in California without a stoplight and one of three counties in California without an incorporated city.



How Is Trinity County Different From Agricultural Rural Communities?

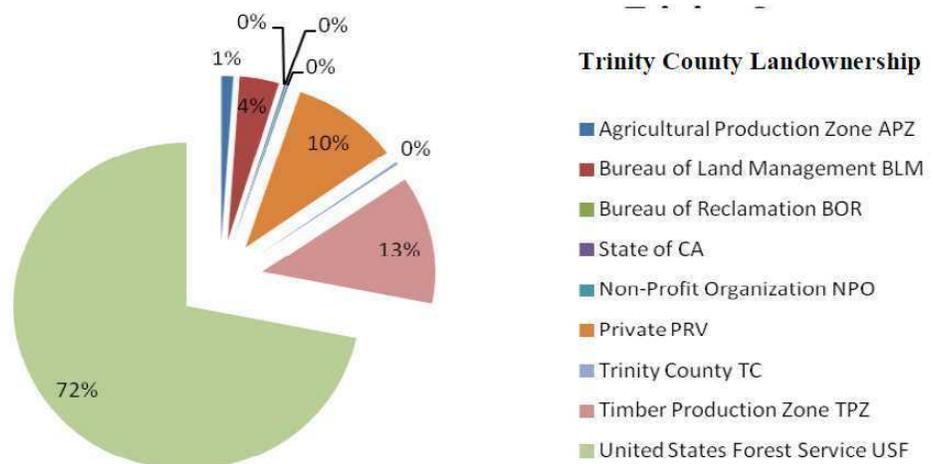
76% of Trinity County is federal land, approximately 72% managed by the USFS and 4% by the BLM. Of the remaining 24%, due to ownership patterns and topography, less than 5% is available for active human development. Thus, by necessity, the county must rely on its relationship with the state and federal land and resource management organizations to provide opportunities for economic development.

If Trinity County were a state, it would have the 3rd highest percentage of public land, behind Alaska and Nevada.

Through the 19th and most of the 20th century the dependence on public land resources worked out fine, thanks to a rich and colorful history in gold mining, logging, timber products, and ranching that utilized those lands.

However, for a variety of economic and social reasons, including the need for environmental protections, those

prosperous days are gone and Trinity County's economic data looks like hundreds of other rural areas across the country, both in privately owned areas like the mid-West and in the public land areas of the West.



Note: APZ and TPZ are all privately held lands. Chart produced by The Watershed Center in Hayfork, CA.

Trinity County, CA: A Profile

One of the keys to Trinity County's future is finding the right balance of utilization and protection of these public land resources, including the water, renewable energy and carbon sinks that are natural products of these resource rich forested lands.

History

Trinity County, which was one of the original 26 counties prior to California becoming a state in 1850, has seen wave after wave of boom-and-bust industries. Gold mining reshaped the rivers and the mountains themselves; later ranching and then logging would leave their mark on the coniferous forests providing positive economic support, while also impacting other environmental resources with unsustainable timber practices.



Trinity Dam was authorized in 1955 as part of the Trinity Division of the Central Valley Project, bringing another temporary boom, along with the flooding of thousands of acres of prime agricultural land and the loss of one of the most magnificent mountain valleys in the US. For 50 years the diversion of most of the water from the Trinity County watershed to the central valley has furnished billions of dollars worth of hydroelectric power and water for the use of the citizens of California.

Most recently, a new “green rush” (the influx of people coming to Trinity County to grow marijuana) is having a significant impact on the ecosystem and the local culture of Trinity's rural communities, the lasting effects of which remain to be seen.

Not only is Trinity County's employment base natural resource dependent, but the tax base for local government is as well. As a public lands community, Trinity County is hard pressed to provide critical services, such as law enforcement and social services, to its far-flung citizens.

Demographics

- **Poverty:** Like many rural communities across the country Trinity County suffers from high poverty rates (2nd poorest in California) with 15.1 % below poverty level. Over 60% of children are on free and reduced lunch programs.
- **Unemployment:** Current rate – 13.1% January of 2010 – 22.2% peaking at above 30%
- **Aging Population:** Changing age characteristics (Trinity is the oldest county in California – Median age of 50), along with high poverty and unemployment rates, compound the economic challenges that are presented by a very small property tax base. With retirees accounting for a larger percentage of the population, there are direct impacts to our schools' reimbursement rates, local business and entrepreneurial activity, and quality and quantity of available workforce.

Trinity County, CA: A Profile

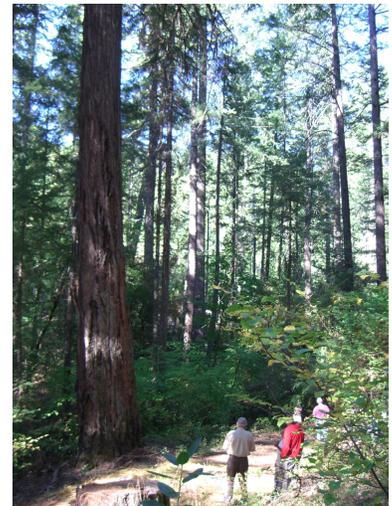
- **Political Trends:** Historically, Trinity County has been a mixed bag of political sentiments and trends (the only county in California that voted for Ross Perot in 1992) and that continues to be the case. While Trinity voted for President Obama in 2008, and narrowly voted for Mitt Romney in 2012 (55 vote margin), Trinity's maverick anti-government spirit is still alive and well. This is reflected with a number of different individuals and groups who have been quite vocal regarding the federal influence over public lands management and the impact on Trinity County's citizens. Another recent development comes with the recent redrawing of Congressional Districts in California, moving Trinity to the Coastal District which will be represented by Jared Huffman (D-Marin) starting in 2013.
- **Racial Demographics:** U.S. Census numbers indicate the following: White 88.5%, Hispanic 7.4%, Native American 5.2% (some overlap) with smaller percentages of other minority groups.
- **More Leadership Roles for Women:** Although they reflect the electorate's wide range of political views mentioned above, there has been an emergence of women in elected and executive roles within the county. Our Board of Supervisors currently has a 4-1 women majority, TPUD has 2 women on their 5 member board, TCRCD has 2 women on their 5 member board, the County Administrative Officer, elected Auditor, elected Treasurer and appointed Clerk Recorder are all women. Lastly, this November, Trinity County elected the first female Superior Court Judge in the county's history.

What Sets Trinity County Apart from other Rural Forested Communities?

The citizens of Trinity County have a demonstrated **history of working together collaboratively for the good of the community** and we are poised to do that again with your help. Some examples of this success include:

Forestry and Fire

- Weaverville Community Forest – Nationally recognized Community managed forest partnering w USFS/BLM
- Community Fire Safe Councils – Developed here first for the state and others
- Volunteer Fire Departments – All volunteer fire department protection
- Trinity River Lumber Co rebuild – Local mill owner invests \$ 20 million to rebuild facility after 2009 fire.
- Trinity County Resource Advisory Committee – Most effective RAC associated with the Secure Rural Schools funding. No lawsuits on any project.
- Many other projects in this category



Health Care

- Mountain Communities Health Care District (Trinity Hospital) – In the time when other rural communities were losing their healthcare infrastructure, MCHCD was formed in 2006 by a vote of the people with a supporting local tax measure which was reapproved in 2010 with another successful election.
- Southern Trinity Health Clinic – Serving primary the area in the southern part of the county.

Trinity County, CA: A Profile

Technology

- Highway 36 Fiber Optic Line – This recently implemented fiber optic line was completed in conjunction with a regional consortium. This regional group is now looking for additional funding sources for a parallel line serving the more populated Hwy 299 corridor.

Energy

- Trinity PUD – Locally organized Public utility district delivers 100% carbon-free power generated by Trinity Dam as part of 1955 legislation Congress authorized when the Trinity Division was added to the Central Valley Project.
- Renewable Energy Development – A number of projects, including biomass and small hydro, continue to be analyzed for potential development. Regarding biomass, there are a number of studies documenting that facilities “right sized” for the resources available can be economically viable, promote forest health and reduce the threat of catastrophic wild fire.

Locally Supported Restoration and Resource Protection Projects

- Trinity River Restoration Program – National model for river restoration with a team of local, state and federal partners including U.S. Forest Service membership on the governing board and NRCS membership on the supporting Federal Advisory Committee.
- 5 Counties Program (part of the RC&D Council) – Innovative regional program that works on infrastructure improvements and watershed restoration to stave off additional endangered species listings
- Trinity Alps Wilderness – Converted from Primitive area to the largest wilderness area in California @ 500,000 acres - Congressionally approved with the help of intense local involvement in 1984.



Many of these successes and natural resource assets also provide an extensive menu of recreational opportunities including: Steelhead and salmon fishing, rafting and kayaking on the Wild and Scenic Trinity River, camping, boating and fishing within the Trinity and Lewiston Lake National Recreation Area, hiking and backpacking in the Trinity Alps Wilderness and many more.

What's next?

For good reasons Trinity County is very proud of its history, its spectacular natural beauty, and our “can do” and “find solutions” attitude. As explained above, we have a proven record of bringing divergent interests together for the common good. We also have immense public resources surrounding us, the national forests being the most prominent. We are poised to take the next step to become a model of environmental stewardship, renewable energy production, public land management, sustainable forestry and idea incubator for successful forested communities nationwide.

Some data and text for this brief were taken from Forest and Water Climate Adaptation: A Plan for Trinity County, CA. Model Forest Policy Program in association with The Watershed Research and Training Center and Cumberland River Compact. Sagle, ID. Medley-Daniel, M. & Thaler, T., Griffith, G., Crossett, T., (Eds). 2011.