News from the Co-editors

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Socio-economics has an increasingly important role in natural resource decision making. This is especially true in British Columbia due to significant market-driven socio-economic changes in the forest sector, the mountain pine beetle epidemic, the treaty process with First Nations, escalating environmental challenges such as climate change, and an unprecedented public interest in natural resource management. A survey of the extension needs of natural resource practitioners found that socio-economics information needs emphasized "opportunities for communities and community-based forestry," and "incorporating social and economic indicators into planning, operations, and policy."[1] In this special issue of *JEM*, we have responded to these socio-economic information needs by presenting articles on trade-off analysis, social and economic indicators, and a series of five extension notes on small forest tenures in British Columbia.

Maness leads off this issue by exploring the context and challenges inherent in balancing social, ecological, and economic objectives through trade-offs in forest management decision making. He discusses historic and current use of trade-off analyis in decision making and recommends guidelines for learning-based public participation, as well as a continuous improvement approach for implementing management decisions.

Harshaw, Sheppard, and Lewis focus on social sustainability indicators, suggesting that they are weakly developed relative to ecological and economic indicators. They describe conceptual frameworks, illuminate issues and challenges, and illustrate how social indicators are used at various scales. They recommend directions for future research in support of improved methods and tools that integrate social indicators into forest management and decision making.

Bull, Schwab, and Jayasinghe delve into the theoretical and practical barriers to defining and applying economic indicators related to sustainable forest management. Their conclusions emphasize the importance of: encouraging stakeholder participation; clearly identifying the stakeholder framework and spatial scale early in the process; balancing the "best" indicators against the "practical" ones; and investing in the creation and maintenance of appropriate datasets.

In the first article of five on small tenures in British Columbia, Ambus, Davis-Case, and Tyler address the growing expectation that woodlots and community forests will diversify the province's tenure system and stimulate local involvement in natural resource management. They also provide context around the legislative and regulatory frameworks governing the operation of small tenures.

Marshall builds on the discussion by outlining management challenges facing small tenure holders, and by suggesting collaborative, ecologically sound approaches as the basis for realizing the many benefits available from forests on small tenures.

[1] Morford, S. and C. Hollstedt. 2007. Revisiting a forest extension strategy for British Columbia: A survey of natural resource practitioners and information providers. British Columbia Ministry of Forests and Range, Research Branch, Victoria, B.C. Technical Report No. 042.

To layer in spatial context, Cathro, Mulkey and Bradley describe the distribution of small, area-based tenures in British Columbia. By looking at socio-economic as well as biophysical data, they illuminate a number of management implications and opportunities for small tenures, including the mountain pine beetle infestation.

Tyler, Ambus, and Davis-Case explore small-tenure governance issues in more detail, emphasizing that accountability and local participation are critical elements in management of public forest lands. Ingredients in other jurisdictions' success suggest that holders of small forest tenures need local autonomy, accompanied by technical support and oversight from governments, and capacity-building opportunities through voluntary associations.

Finally, Ambus, Davis-Case, Mitchell, and Tyler discuss market opportunities, benefits, and barriers from the unique perspective of small forest tenures. Collaborative and innovative approaches can enable woodlots and community forests to cultivate niche markets, manage the "value chain" creatively, and build on their strengths within networks. They conclude by noting that some approaches can be implemented without any policy changes, while others may require revised guidelines or greater tenure flexibility from provincial agencies to support diversification and realization of the full range of benefits from small tenures.

Coming Up

JEM 8(3) will present a cluster of articles around the topic of ecosystem-based management, while *JEM* 9(1) will include a special series on non-timber forest products developed in collaboration with the Centre for Non-timber Resources.