



**Volunteer Services in a Gateway County:  
An Example in Valley County, Idaho**

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### **Introduction**

Gateway community counties are those places that front on major expanses of public land, which is predominantly used by recreators. In Idaho and many other Western states there are a significant number of such counties. Being a Gateway county has unique responsibilities and demands. Among those are the services that are needed to find, protect and rescue visitors to the public lands. In Idaho's case, local government's sources of revenue are property taxes and service fees with property tax being the revenue source of last resort. When other sources do not provide enough, it is charged to property taxes and the local taxpayer.

### **Problem Situation**

As the economic structure of Valley County changes, there are implications for community members and for the services that will be available for both residents and visitors. The change from commodity production to amenity based use puts different pressures on local governments and citizens. Traditional commodity production tends to be, but not always, a year around operation. Workers and their families would move to a community and build their lives in that community. They built homes, schools, churches, clubs and civic organizations. Generally the commodity production jobs paid enough to support a family with some extras.

In the cases of the amenity-based economies, people come to see and perhaps stay. They are dependent on incomes from other places or are purchasing a lifestyle for a short period. The result is a more mobile population and lots of visitors. The workforce jobs are generally lower paying, without benefits and seasonal. The Idaho Department of Labor lists the 20 lowest average paying occupations on its web site. Of these, 18 are



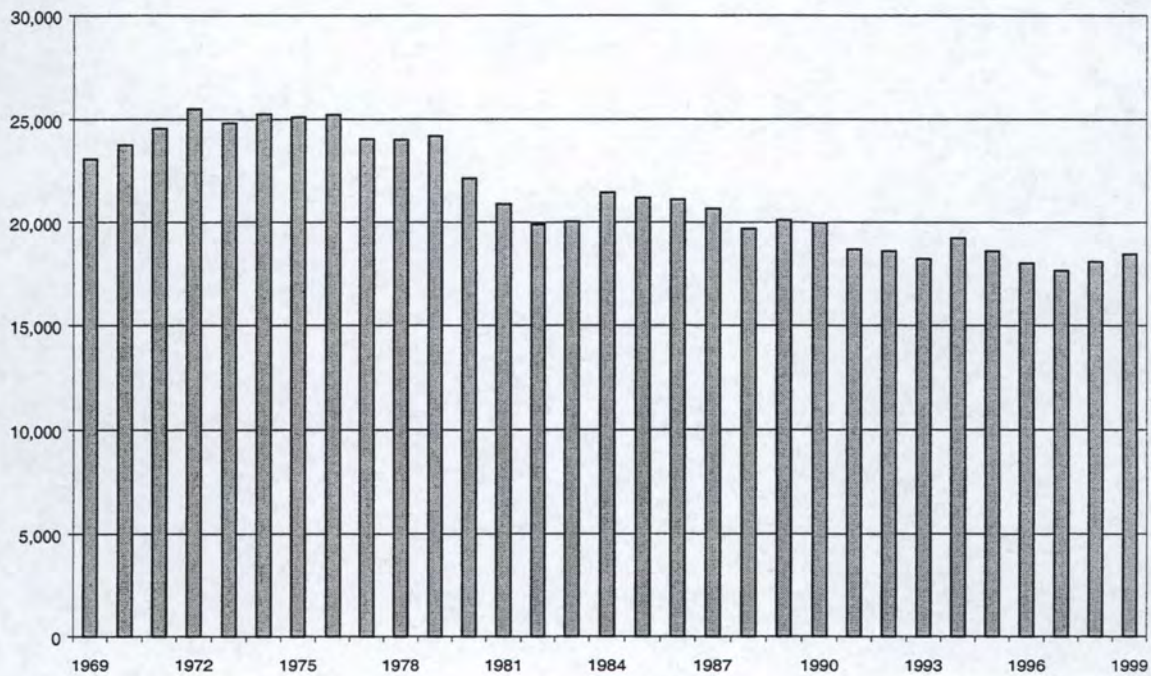
solidly amenities based economy jobs. As a result, the labor force turns over more rapidly and tends to be younger. These people are less likely to invest in community institutions and structures because the long-term commitment is lacking.

In the case of Valley County, the pressures from the change in public land use have been going on for 30 years. They came to a head in June 2001 when the last major saw mill in Valley County was closed. That put visitors as the major source of export earnings for the county. This is expected to lower the average income per capita because visitor service jobs pay less than traditional production jobs. Currently, Valley County ranks third highest in the State for per capita income with a figure of \$27,527. However, this figure includes retirement income, transfer payments, and individuals who own homes and claim their primary residence in Valley County. The majority of jobs in Valley County are in the Trades and Services (IDL category), primarily tourism, and these jobs tend to be among the lowest wages offered. Trades and Services made up 45% of the non-farm payroll jobs in Valley County in 2001.

As Valley and other rural counties look for opportunities to find livable wage jobs, one thing must be kept in mind; many of the rural areas in Idaho were populated because of their proximity to a natural resource that was processed in some way and sold elsewhere. As the industries created by these resource bases collapse, so too do the economies of the surrounding areas. Most of Idaho's rural areas tend to be too far from major shipping terminals or they do not provide the necessary amenities to attract major industrial or commercial employers. In many cases, this leaves these communities with few other options than to begin relying very heavily on unpredictable tourism dollars. To further compound the problem, the counties facing additional need for dollars are the counties who are losing shared revenues from decline of natural resource based activities on Federal lands within their borders.



**Figure 1. Valley County Average Earnings per Jobs 1969 – 99.**



(adjusted to 1996 dollars)

Visitors as well as local residents rely on various services to make their community safe and to improve its quality of life. These services include fire protection, search and rescue, emergency medical service, police protection, solid waste management, road maintenance, service clubs, youth organizations and churches. This also includes year round maintained access to recreational activities such as campground and trail use in the summer and snowmobiling in the winter. Providing these services to residents, and others, is not free. With few minor exceptions, there are no mechanisms in place to charge users for many of these services. Generally, these services cost the



taxpayers or the providing agency. In one example, in 1999, an effort to find a lost hunter in Valley County cost the taxpayers \$3628.25. It consumed 2320 volunteer man-hours. Valued at the national volunteer rate used of \$13.24 per hour, this time was worth \$30717. The 6210 miles placed on search vehicles if valued at 40 cents per mile would be \$2484. This does not include the cost of Air Force helicopters brought in to help search. The major share of the value was volunteers time and their vehicle use. Another factor in many of these Gateway Communities and Counties is that volunteers holding down other jobs and running other businesses provide many of the volunteer services such as search and rescue. When employers let the volunteers leave work, there is some lost productivity and disruption to the work taking place, whether the worker is paid for the time or not. The implication is that many locals donate from their businesses and personal lives to provide the services. Many do this because they feel having these services improves the quality of life in the community. Others do it because people need assistance (humanitarian reasons). This bulletin reports on the provision of several services in Valley County Idaho. Some are provided mainly to visitors while others are used mostly by year around residents.

### **Purpose of Study**

Describe the provision of services related to public land use by residents and non-residents for Valley County Idaho. Quantify the commitment (willingness) by local residents to providing local services.

The purpose of this study was to identify the reliance of local communities on volunteer labor, and to determine what services are expected by, and provided to, residents and non-residents through volunteer labor. The next part of the study was to look at how a change in economic base might affect these services and the amount of time, or ways in which volunteers would offer their time. The final part of the study was to explore ways that local governments or agencies may consider increasing funding to provide a continuation or increase in the services that are expected and provided to residents and non-residents.



### **Data Collection**

A number of methods were used to collect data. Volunteers collected data on persons providing time to local service to clubs, fraternal organizations, local government and religious organizations. The majority were collected by the Government class of Cascade High School, Other data was gleaned by the interviewing the Valley County Sheriff, Director of Search and Rescue, Director of Emergency Medical Services at the 2 county hospitals and managers of the ambulance services. We saw in Table 1 that the respondents received income from a wide variety of source sectors. All parts of the community are contributing to this effort. However government , which included public schools provided the largest proportion of the respondents.

**Table 1. Sectors Providing Income to Respondent Valley County**

#### **Residents (2001)**

<u>Sector/Industry</u>	<u>Percent of Respondents</u>
Timber	11
Recreation Services(skiing, biking, rafting, boating, guiding)	10
Restaurants and Lodging	10
Agriculture	10
Government (federal, state and Local)	18
Retail trade	11
Construction and maintenance	12
Transfers (Social Security, Pensions, Personal retirement Funds)	5
Mining	1
Personal Services (medical, legal, insurance, social)	12
Other	0

The problem facing gateway communities is how to provide the services citizens and visitors desire and need. With a more transient population, training needs and

recruitment require more effort. With lower wage service jobs, many citizens require more than one job to meet financial needs. Thus their time available to support community institutions and services is reduced.

We see from Table 2 that once people come to the county, they do not move around in the county. Also, 51 percent have been in the county more than 10 years. Will this continue with the changed economy?

Community participation was fairly evenly spread over different types of organizations with churches receiving the rate of volunteering. Other organizations to which persons volunteered were evenly distributed over various organizations.



**Table 2. Time Resident in the Community and County**

<u>Time resident</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>City</u>
Less than 1 year	3	3
One to Three	11	11
Four to Five	13	13
Six to ten	22	22
More than 10 years	51	51

**Table 3. Community Participation in Past Month**

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Percent involved</u>
Church	32
Service Clubs (Loins, Kiwanis, Rotarians, etc.)	8
Chambers of Commerce	14
Parent Teachers Assn.	14
Youth Group Leader	13
Local Government	15
Local Volunteer Services	14

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110

Sums to more than 100% because some persons participate in multiple organizations.



**Table 4. Hours per Month Devoted to Volunteering (118 Respondents)**

<u>Time volunteered</u>	<u>Number persons volunteering</u>	<u>Total hours</u>
0-2 Hours (1 hour)	32	32
2-5 hours (3.5 hours)	21	74
5-10 hours (7.5 hours)	14	105
More than 10 hours (12 hours)	17	204
<hr/>		
Total	84	415

Among the 118 respondents to the surveys, the average time of those volunteering was 5 hours per month. Seventy one percent (84 persons) of the respondents volunteered some time. Thirty one persons, 37%, volunteered 7 ½ or more hours per month and provided 309 (75%) of the 415 hours volunteered each month. It appears 1/3 of the persons are doing 75 percent of the volunteering. Based on the standard value of volunteer's time of \$13.24 per hour, the value to the communities of their efforts exceeds \$5494 each month.

### **Valley County Situation**

A number of public services in Valley County depend on volunteers. EMTs are volunteers who have been trained. The same is true for Search and Rescue with the exception of 1 deputy who accompanies S&R operations. In interviews with the three EMT districts in Valley County, some information came out that gave the researchers a different view on the situation than what was initially hypothesized. At the beginning of this project it was theorized that out-of-county visitors would be a financial strain on tax paying residents because they would be the ones most likely to not pay for services rendered thereby causing those delinquent bills to be written off or subsidized by the county tax rolls. In actuality, the population that creates the financial burden on the EMT services and others is the resident population that works low wage jobs without benefits. These tend to be people working in amenity-based jobs. More of these types of jobs will be created in gateway counties as recreation and tourism becomes the major economic



base for these areas. In general, those out of county residents that come to gateway counties to recreate have enough disposable income to do so. That income must be generated by jobs that pay higher wages and provide benefits that can cover the costs of services rendered to those visitors. This leads to the point that not only will Valley and other counties in Idaho have to figure out how to pay for increased use of public services and maintenance, but also how to deal with residents working two or three low paying jobs without benefits.

The regular crew picks up the solid waste. The extra dumpsters placed during the summer months cost \$25,386 to the county for solid waste dumpster fees.

Special investigations by Community police departments also entail extra costs. In 1998 there was an ongoing death investigation and a narcotic case, which required 40 hours. At least one officer accompanies most search and rescue operations. That is another cost to the county or community.

**Alternatives to Resolve the Issue**

Because services are provided to both local residents and to visitors from outside the county and even outside the state, the question arises as to how counties can recover at least some of the cost that is acquired.

**Possible Alternatives for consideration:**

- 1) Do nothing
- 2) Reduce some tax-supported services in order to increase others
- 3) Increase resident property taxes
- 4) Encourage construction projects that will increase overall county valuation
- 5) Charge for services (how do you charge out of county folks for police protection)
- 6) Local option tax

A major question for discussion, if not further research, would be; can there be an increase in revenue without the local residents paying at least some portion of the bill.

<b>Alternative</b>	<b>Benefit of Alternative</b>	<b>Cost of Alternative</b>
<u>1) Do Nothing</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No decision to make</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Would not need to raise taxes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Increased demand on current resources</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Decreased services provided</li> </ul>



<p><u>2) Reduce some services</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> More money available for other services</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> No need to raise taxes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Possible loss of services</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Residents continue to pay the bill</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Loss of some services</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Local taxpayer dissatisfaction</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Residents continue to pay the bill</li> </ul>
<p><u>3) Increase property taxes</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> More money available</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Increase/continued services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Taxpayer dissatisfaction</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Residents continue to pay the bill</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reduced real estate activity</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Possible reduced ability to bond in the community (taxpayers won't pass them)</li> </ul>
<p><u>4) Encourage Construction</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Increased valuation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> More money available</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Increased/continued services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Limited markets</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Taxpayer fear of increased valuation on current properties</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Land use planning issues</li> </ul>
<p><u>5) Charge for services</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> May increase money available</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Non residents would help pay for the services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Logistical nightmare</li> </ul>
<p><u>6) Local option tax</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> More money available</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Increased/continued service</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Non residents help pay for services</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Possibly could decrease property taxes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Taxpayer dissatisfaction</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tourist may decide to go elsewhere</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not possible legislatively</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Take local effort to sell the idea to voters</li> </ul>



# Appendices I

## Tabulation for Valley County Volunteers

Questionnaire number

**Sources of Income** (principal source) mark 1 where checked

Timber Industry	15	0.10678
Recreation Industry	12	0.085424
Hospitality Industry(Resturants and Lodging)	14	0.099661
Agriculture	15	0.10678
Recreation Services(skiing,biking,rafting,boating,guiding)	3	0.021356
Government (Federal, State,Local)	26	0.185085
Retail Trade	16	0.113898
Construction and Maintenance	17	0.121017
Transfers (Social Security,Personal Retirement)	7	0.049831
Mining	2	0.014237
Personal Services (medical, legal,insurance,social	17	0.121017
Other	0	0
	144	

## Participant Description

1. How long have you lived in this community? Enter 1 where appropriate

Less than 1 year	3	0.025424
One -three years	13	0.110169
Four - five years	16	0.135593
Six - 10 years	26	0.220339
More than 10 years	60	0.508475
	118	0.974576

2. How long have you lived in Valley County? Enter 1 where appropriate

Less than 1 year	3	0.025424
One -three years	13	0.110169
Four - five years	15	0.127119
Six - 10 years	37	0.313559
More than 10 years	60	0.508475
	128	

3. How many live in this household? Enter number

Preschooler	13	0.111111
Elementary school	35	0.299145
Highschool	78	0.666667
Adults (Always 1 or greater because questionnaire is answered )	195	1.666667
	321	

4. Work outside the home (enter number)

	190	1.623932
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5. Does someone operate a business from this home? Yes=1,No=2

	190	1.623932
--	-----	----------

Type of business

## Community Participation

Church	38	0.322034
Service Club (Kiwanis.Lions, Rotarians, etc)	9	0.076271
Chamber of Commerce	17	0.144068
Parent Teacher Association	16	0.135593
Scout Leader	2	0.016949
4H Leader	4	0.033898
Church Youth Group	9	0.076271
Fair Board	5	0.042373
City Council	4	0.033898



County Commission	1	0.008475
School Board	1	0.008475
Hospital Board	1	0.008475
School Advisory Committee	3	0.025424
County Planning Board	2	0.016949
Volunteer Fire Department	8	0.067797
EMT/Ambulance Driver	1	0.008475
Search and Rescue	7	0.059322
	128	1.084746

How many hours per month devoted to volunteering

Less than 2 hours (Estimated as 1 hour)	32	1	0.229817
2-5 hours (Estimated as 3.5 hours)	21	3.5	0.150817
5-10 hours (Estimated as 7.5 hours)	14	7.5	0.100545
More than 10 hours (Estimated as 12 hours)	17	12	0.12209
	84		0.603269

Total  
Hours  
32  
73.5  
105  
204  
414.5



# Appendices II

## Hours of Equipment Use by Valley County Search and Rescue during 1998

Operation Number	Pickup Hours	Total Pickup	ATV Hours	Total ATV	Snow mach Hrs	Tot Value
98-01	10	180			32	\$512
98-02	10	180			65	1040
98-03	20	360			29	464
98-04	25	450			2	32
98-05	48	864	12	192	50	800
98-06	22	396			6	96
98-07	22	396				
98-08	4	72	8	128		
98-09	19	342	12	192		
98-10	11	198				
98-11	15	270	3	48		
98-12	32	576				
98-13	2	36	3	48		
98-14	20	360				
98-15	10	180			48	768

Pickup cost/hour	\$18.00
ATV Cost/hour	\$16
Snow Machine cost/hr	\$16
Horse Rental\$/hr	\$16
Boat Rental \$/hr	\$35
Diving Equip Rental/hr	\$45
Volunteer Time/hour	\$13.24

### Valley County Search and Rescue, 1998

Search #	Man Hours	Value/Hour	Value Volunteer t Vol Time	Reimbursen \$for Equip
98-01	48	\$13.24	\$635.52	430
98-02	20	\$13.24	264.8	68
98-03	38	13.24	503.12	290
98-04	50	13.24	662	235
98-05	276	13.24	3654.24	1320
98-06	72	13.24	953.28	262
98-07	61	13.24	807.64	274
98-08	120	13.24	1588.8	240
98-09	40	13.24	529.6	120
98-10	39	13.24	516.36	85
98-11	54	13.24	714.96	112
98-12	270	13.24	3574.8	1402
98-13	5	13.24	66.2	15
98-14	150	13.24	1986	240
98-15	98	13.24	1297.52	806
Total	1341		\$17,754.84	\$5,899.00



Horse Hrs	Total Value	Boat	Total Value Dive Equip	Total Value Tol for Rescue
				\$692
				1220
				824
				482
33	528			2384
				492
15	240			636
				200
				534
				198
			6	270
		20	700	28
				1260
				2536
				84
				360
				948
				\$12,178

nent	Total Value Rescue	Net Cost to Community/County
	\$1,327.52	\$897.52
	1484.8	1416.8
	1327.12	1037.12
	1144	909
	6038.24	4718.24
	1445.28	1183.28
	1443.64	1169.64
	1788.8	1548.8
	1063.6	943.6
	714.36	629.36
	1302.96	1190.96
	6110.8	4708.8
	150.2	135.2
	2346	2106
	2245.52	1439.52
	\$29,932.84	\$24,033.84