



Urban–Rural Influences in U.S. Environmental and Economic Development Policy*

Richard H. Foster and Mark K. McBeth

Department of Political Science, Campus Box 8073, Idaho State University, Pocatello, ID 83209, U.S.A.

Abstract — Despite the fact that rural communities have the most to gain and lose in matters involving economic development and environmental preservation, they often are given the least voice in the political processes that create policies in these areas. Agendas are set, policies formulated and implemented by policy-makers, administrators, and practitioners in urban areas. These outside policies may not be consistent with how rural communities view the tradeoffs between the environment and the economy. We call for decentralization of economic and environmental policy. It is understood, however, that such an approach may involve risk. What if rural-based policy-makers and practitioners are, for instance, aggressively anti-environmental and pro-economic growth? Using results from a national sample of rural development officials, this study examines the environmental and economic development attitudes of development officials based on a population continuum. The findings suggest that rural-based development officials often have a greater appreciation of rural environmental quality of life features compared to their urban counterparts. The implications of the findings are detailed and suggestions for future research are provided. Copyright © 1996 Elsevier Science Ltd

Introduction

Policy choices are often arrayed as decisions between desirable goals that are mutually exclusive. The politics leading to the need for decision is marked by attempts by all sorts of groups to paint their preferred outcome as the only reasonable alternative, particularly in contrast to the alternatives preferred by competing groups. This core feature of the American political process presents policy-makers (politicians), administrators, and experts with both challenges and opportunities. The challenge is to accommodate the myriad of political interests clamoring for policies friendly to their specific concerns without driving some of those interests into bitter opposition. The opportunity is to hear and consider a wide variety of views stemming from both narrow and selfish interests to public interests. The challenge and the opportunity come together as policy-makers struggle to craft compromises incorporating many interests and administra-

tors struggle to implement the resulting policy, which is often incredibly vague as a direct consequence of that very compromise.

Anyone closely observing the political process must be reminded of the old saw that ‘anyone with a liking for sausage and cheese ought not watch either being made’. Politics is messy. It is full of ridiculous posturing, extreme statements, threats, and intimidation. It is made more treacherous by personal rivalry, partisanship, interest group money, as well as by odd and shifting coalitions. Politics does, indeed, make strange bedfellows. On the national stage this sometimes melodramatic morality play unfolds under the watchful eye of an occasionally cynical and always aggressive press corps. While this political drama makes good theater, it tells only part of the story. Seldom does the watchful eye of the press see and report on the implementation process. Thoughtful observers know, of course, that policy outcomes really are accomplished as much by the process of implementing policy as they are by making it. And implementation is also as political as is policy-making.

*This research is supported by Faculty Research Committee Grant No. 742 at Idaho State University.

While the political process taking place primarily in Washington, DC is a very public spectacle (even accounting for the minimal coverage of the implementation part of the process), it is accorded considerable less attention as it takes place in the states, even less in many cities, and seems off our political radar screens entirely in rural parts of the country. But that should not be taken to mean that rural areas are devoid of politics or that its politics are any less messy, serious, or important. Occasionally an issue fueling rural political battle catches the national psyche, and the rest of the nation gets a brief glimpse of the intensity of political combat marking many of these conflicts. One obvious case in point is the controversy in northwestern states pitting the survival of the endangered Northern Spotted Owl against endangered loggers and mill workers. This controversy is particularly intense in the small towns and cities of the northwestern United States, many of which have a dual dependency on cutting timber and preserving the forest. The controversy is intense because more than just jobs are at stake. At stake is a way of life that has been at the center of these communities for as long as anyone can remember. At stake is the survival of the communities themselves. At stake is a set of values above place, family, work, and the future that until now have been viewed as permanent fixtures of life. Also at stake is an entire ecosystem of which the Spotted Owl controversy is just a small part. The mindless impact of technology and the human attempt to control and manipulate our environment have had devastating consequences in our past and present and promise more devastation in the future. This has been well documented in the context of America west of the Mississippi (Worster, 1979, 1986; Stegner, 1987; Reisner, 1986).

In rural America economic endeavor has traditionally been based on utilizing (or exploiting) land, water, wildlife, and air. Rural residents have relied on hunting and fishing for both fun and for profit; they have blasted their way through rock for the riches of gold, silver, and uranium and stripped the earth bare to snatch deposits of coal, molybdenum, and phosphate which lay underneath and even washed away mountains for gold; they have made the desert bloom with agricultural bounty by damming the rivers, diverting the streams, and tapping into underground reservoirs; they have introduced vast herds of sheep and cattle to its fragile plains, deserts, and mountains; they have cut down vast tracts of forests and changed the trees into an incredible array of wood products; they have dotted the landscape with huge coal-fired electric generating plants whose brown blot on azure skies is visible from a hundred miles and more, while also damming its great rivers for more electricity; and

they have buried nuclear waste that will be incredibly dangerous for a period which is longer than humans have inhabited the continent to date and which, only five decades into the nuclear age, is already leaking into and befouling the environment.

Rural America is no different than any other patch of land inhabited by humans. First and foremost it has been viewed as a resource to be exploited. Its value is in its ability to sustain the economic requirements of its inhabitants. Yet, despite the environmentally destructive effects of economic exploitation of the environment, it still retains many of the characteristics we associate with times before technological progress allowed effective economic exploitation on the grand scale. As a consequence, the 'rurality' remains a symbol to ruralites and urbanites alike. Rural citizens think of themselves as self-reliant individualists who at the same time are quick to come to the aid of a neighbor needing help. Rural residents feel isolated and are sometimes insular. They can be defensive when they feel something is being imposed on them from Washington, DC, 'easterners', or indeed any city slickers. They are particularly quick to go on the attack against 'environmentalists', even though many rural westerners hold environmental attitudes (e.g. McBeth and Foster, 1994).

It is difficult to measure the difference between urban and rural environmental values. Some recent literature suggests, however, that the environmental values held by rural residents are local in scope in contrast to global values held by 'outside environmentalists'. Urban environmentalists may well hold global, abstract, and scientific views of the environment which are simply irrelevant to rural residents at best or a threat to their way of life at worst. Although many rural citizens hold environmental values, they are more likely the hygienic environmental values of clean water, clean air, and open spaces. Rural citizens are much less likely to be sympathetic to urban environmental values such as rain forest, ozone protection, or animal rights (McBeth and Foster, 1994).

Rural residents, likewise, seem to favor 'inside' economic development or strategies such as small business creation, retention and expansion of existing business, and homegrown business development. Residents are generally opposed to 'outside' economic development or strategies such as industrial recruitment, tourism development, or retirement community development. These latter strategies are typically more urban development strategies (McBeth, 1995).

Rural residents perceive, probably correctly, that environmental 'outsiders' are perfectly willing to

sacrifice local economic well-being and traditional ways of life on the altar of global environmental concerns. In a similar manner, they fear that outside economic development groups are equally willing to sacrifice local environmental quality and traditions on the altar of corporate greed. As a consequence, politics is more intense. Political battles are elevated to wars over cultural and economic survival. Ideological elites on both sides use fear tactics to mobilize armies of committed, true-believing, and frightened partisans. No quarter is given, and none is expected. Compromise is the first casualty of this kind of politics. It is the ultimate clash between myth and ideology.

Notwithstanding this grand political battle, life goes on for most people. And, for most people and most communities in rural areas, life involves a constant struggle for economic well-being and economic survival. As the availability of exploitable resources changes, as demand changes, or as policies change, whole communities are thrown into upheaval or economic boom or economic bust. For small communities throughout the United States the problem in recent decades has been economic bust. Sometimes it happens unexpectedly with the announcement from corporate headquarters 700 miles away that the mine will be shut down, throwing hundreds of people out of work and abruptly ending the reason for the existence of that community. Sometimes it comes on more slowly, as the local timber mill becomes increasingly unable to compete in either the cost of its finished product or in its ability to successfully compete in the bidding on timber sales. And, for many communities, the decline is even slower as decades after decade slow economic decline takes its toll. Changes in transportation, in economies of scale, or in technology slowly and almost imperceptively make these communities economic dinosaurs. Nevertheless, all of these communities are home to real people with a real stake in their community survival.

Despite the fact that rural citizens themselves have the most to gain and lose in matters involving economic development and environmental preservation, they often are given the least voice in the political processes that create policies in these areas. Policy matters are most often decided at levels of power and influence at which the rural populace are peripheral at best. Agendas are set, policies formulated, and implemented by development policy-makers, and practitioners in large urban areas in conjunction with rural-based practitioners, local elites, interest groups, and elected officials. While all of these groups are important, we cannot study all of them at once. We have chosen to study the differences in environmental attitudes among rural development officials. The conventional wisdom is

that urban-based practitioners and policy-makers are more environmentally concerned compared to their rural counterparts. No empirical studies of this subject have been conducted, which leads us to ask: what are the differences in rural-based and urban-based policy-makers and practitioners in their views of environmental preservation and economic development?

Rural environmental and economic development attitudes

The level of support for environmental preservation among rural development policy-makers and practitioners is unknown. This study attempts to fill this gap. We must rely on studies of rural citizens to help in our understanding of rural environmental concern and to create a framework for our study. The level of this concern among rural citizens is a source of considerable debate.

The answer to the question of rural environmental concern, of course, depends upon how one defines and measures 'environmental concern'. An excellent starting point for the debate is Buttell and Flinn (1974) and Buttell (1975). These studies, using Wisconsin survey data from the late 1960s and early 1970s, found either no significant relationships between rural residency and environmental concern (Buttell and Flinn, 1974) or more environmental concern among rural residents as compared to their urban counterparts (Buttell, 1975).

Studies in the later 1970s and early 1980s cast doubt on these findings. Tremblay and Dunlap (1978) discovered: (1) rural residents when compared to their urban counterparts were less concerned with environmental problems; (2) the urban/rural dichotomy was stronger when concern was assessed at the community compared to the state level; and (3) rural farmers are particularly unconcerned about the environment. The authors offered two theories to explain their results: differential exposure and extractive-commodity theory. The first theory asserted that since rural residents are less exposed to environmental pollution, they are less likely to consider it a problem. The second theory contended that rural residents view the environment as a commodity for exploitation (Tremblay and Dunlap, 1978). Lowe and Pinhey (1982) follow in this rather rural anti-environmental tone both in their finding and their theoretical assertions.

More recent studies dispute the rural anti-environment hypothesis and instead suggest a pro-environmental attitude in rural communities. Fortmann and Kusel (1990), in their study of Oregon rural forest

communities, found that new residents from urban areas were not more likely to hold environmental values compared to local residents. New residents were, however, more likely to give 'voice' to preexisting rural environmental attitudes. McBeth and Foster (1994) argue that 'rural environment attitudes' are most properly measured through rural residents' environmental quality of life choices. They found when using such a measure no differences in environmental attitudes between lower income long-time residents and higher income newcomers. Rudzitis and Johansen (1991) found that a cross-section of rural residents living next to wilderness areas strongly supported the wilderness designation. Alm and Witt (1994, p. 15), in their study of rural and urban Idaho, found that the 'beliefs and perceptions of rural residents do not appear to be substantially different than urban residents when it comes to environmental protection'. Finally, the importance of environmental features in the very definition of rurality is found in numerous studies (e.g. Willits *et al.*, 1990; Hummon, 1990).

In regard to development and the environment, a series of studies demonstrates rural public concern for the effects of economic growth on the environment (e.g. McBeth, 1995; Willits and Crider, 1993). Others have found that the pristine natural environment is an important economic asset and should be preserved for economic reasons, not just health and aesthetic ones (e.g. Powers, 1988; Johnson and Rasker, 1993). Johnson (1993) provides numerous case studies of resource-dependent communities that have begun the difficult process of reconciling environmental preservation and economic development. These case studies demonstrate that grassroots planning can successfully find strategies that reconcile the environment and the economy. The literature places dominant emphasis on citizen attitudes.

The present study is based on the assumption that governmental and private developmental officials are even more critical in determining development policies. Accordingly, we survey these officials.

The data

Survey data were collected from a national sample of rural development leaders listed in *Rural Development Policy Makers and Practitioners* (1993) published by the Corporation for Enterprise Development. This directory is a comprehensive listing of such officials. The respondents are public and private non-elected officials of some state agencies, university centers, funding organizations,

national associations, nonprofit corporations, and utility companies. This directory, while not exhaustive in its list of important state economic development officials, is the best sampling list available for this subject. A systematic random sample was drawn from the approximate 1450 non-elected officials listed in the book. Seven hundred (750) surveys were mailed and reminder postcards followed to increase the response rate. The response rate was 41%.

Dependent variables

Environmental attitudes. The term 'environmental attitudes' is varied and, as argued earlier, the answer to whom does and does not hold such attitudes depends very much on the type of question asked. With this in mind, this study operationalized 'environmental attitudes' in three different ways. Economic development policy-makers and practitioners were asked the following series of questions concerning the importance of the environment to rural communities:

1. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of five environmental features in the quality of life determinations of rural communities in their state. Officials answered on a scale of 1 (very unimportant) to 7 (very important). A composite measure was formed for each respondent that totaled the responses and divided by five to create a single measure of the importance of environmental quality of life features.
2. Respondents were given four clusters of contradictory rural policy directions and asked to answer how strong they agree or disagree with each policy direction. The questions were scaled 1 (don't agree) to 7 (strongly agree). Each cluster provided an anti-environmental/utilitarian policy choice and an environmental/sustainable policy choice. This question was adapted from Mohai (1985).
3. Officials were asked to rate the importance of potential adverse environmental consequences when pursuing economic development activities. Respondents answered the item on a scale of 1 (very unimportant) to 7 (very important).

Economic development attitudes. There is no well developed literature with a national data base that demonstrates the differences between rural-based and urban-based rural economic development attitudes. This data base attempts to fill this gap by examining four economic development areas that relate to support for environmental preservation:

1. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of five economic features in the quality of life determinations of rural residents in their states. Officials answered each question on a scale of 1 (very unimportant) to 7 (very important). A composite feature was formed that totaled the responses and divided by five to create a single measure of the importance of economic quality of life features in the lives of rural residents.
2. Officials were asked to rate their agreement with six different economic development strategies. Three strategies encouraged development from outside the community (recruitment, tourism development, and development of retirement community), and three encouraged development from inside the community (small business creation, retention/expansion, and homegrown business development). A composite measure of the ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ development strategies was created. These questions were adapted from Willits and Crider (1993).
3. Respondents were asked whether they believed ‘economic well-being was possible in rural communities without population growth’. They answered the question ‘yes’ or ‘no’. This was based on a key principle of sustainable development, which asserts that economic well-being is possible without population growth and hence economic development activities need not be destructive to the environment (Kinsley, 1993).
4. Officials were asked ‘how much influence should local citizens have over the formation of local economic development policy?’ This question again is based on a key principle of sustainable development. Its environmental importance is that it is assumed that if rural citizens (rather than interest groups of state or federal elected officials) made economic development policy, environmental preservation would be given more importance.

Independent variable

There is no single definition of ‘rural’. For the purposes of this study, we defined ‘rural-based officials’ as respondents whose primary place of residence was in a community of less than 5000 in population. We defined ‘urban-based officials’ as respondents whose place of residence was in a community of over 50,000 in population (using the U.S. Census definition of urban). We included a third category of respondents who reside in communities with population between 5000 and 49,999. The mean population of the community of residence for rural-based respondents ($N = 63$) was 2548. The mean population of urban-based respondents was 359,752 ($N = 124$) (see Appendix). The mean

population for those respondents living in the 5000–49,999 population range (small cities) was 23,115 ($N = 118$).

A series of propositions were tested.

Proposition 1: quality of life features. (A) There is no difference in the rating of environmental issues as quality of life factors between the three population categories of development officials; and (B) there is no difference in the rating of economic issues as quality of life factors between the three population categories of development officials.

Proposition 2: rural policy choices. (A) There is no difference in the ratings of anti-environment/utilitarian policy choices between the three different population categories of development officials; and (B) there is no difference in the ratings of environmental/sustainable policy choices between the three population categories of rural development officials.

Proposition 3: impact of development on the environment. There is no difference in ratings of the importance of potential adverse impact on the environment resulting from economic development between the three population categories of development officials.

Proposition 4: economic development strategies. (A) There is no difference in ratings of ‘outside’ economic development strategies between the three population categories of development officials; and (B) there is no difference in ratings of ‘inside’ economic development strategies between the three population categories of development officials.

Proposition 5: population growth. There is no association between the responses to the question of whether economic well-being is possible without growth and the three population categories of development officials.

Propositions 6: citizen influence. There is no association between responses to the question of how much influence local citizens should have over the formation of local economic development policy and the three population categories of development officials.

Statistical procedures

Five of the propositions used questions that were answered with a 7-point scale, and therefore means and standard deviations were calculated and an ANOVA with a calculated *F*-test was performed to test for differences in the means of the three population categories. This test was performed on propositions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6. We also ran a multivariate analysis on these propositions where we controlled for income, age, and education of the respondents and in doing so were able to isolate the effects of population on the dependent variables. A chi-square test was performed on proposition 5 where the question provided nominal data.

Results

The profile of respondents presented in the Appendix demonstrates that urban respondents when compared to rural respondents are: more likely to work for a state government, younger, more educated, more likely to be educated in business, and possess a higher income. Their age, education, and income would support higher levels of environmental support, based on studies of the general population (i.e. Jones and Dunlap, 1992). In this data set, only age played an important predictor role. Age was inversely related to environmental attitudes. Income and education played no significant role in predicting environmental attitudes among this sample population. It should be noted that since this is a sample of elites, education and income had restricted variance, and this may account for the lack of correlation between these

variables and environmental concern. However, organization of employment and educational type were important predictors of support.

Those who worked for state governments and businesses were less environmentally concerned. In a similar vein, those who were educated in business were less environmentally concerned.

Proposition 1: ratings of environmental quality of life features

In Table 1, there were significant differences between the three categories in their ratings of the 'importance of fishing and viewing of wildlife' ($F = 3.40$) and the composite mean ($F = 2.98$). On both of these, the mean of the rural category was higher than that of the other two categories. This finding is consistent with previous research of rural citizens in Idaho that demonstrates the importance of environmental factors in rural quality of life equations (McBeth and Foster, 1994). It is also consistent with rural/urban ideology (Hummon, 1990). The literature and this data base suggest that rural citizens and rural-based economic development officials alike seem to have a greater appreciation of environmental quality of life features compared to their suburban or urban counterparts. We can reject the first part of proposition 1, which asserts no difference between rural-based and urban-based officials in the rating of environmental quality of life features. In regard to the second part of the proposition, there were no significant differences in the ratings of economic factors in the

Table 1. Quality of life ratings of respondents

Feature	Population						<i>F</i> -test
	Under 5000 (<i>N</i> = 63)		5000–49,999 (<i>N</i> = 120)		50,000+ (<i>N</i> = 125)		
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	
1. Employment opp.	4.30	2.85	4.25	2.82	4.00	2.82	0.59
2. Water quality	5.87	1.43	5.84	1.37	5.69	1.56	0.73
3. Water supply	5.86	1.52	5.67	1.51	5.53	1.58	1.86
4. Salary and wages	5.34	1.29	5.17	1.29	5.41	1.29	0.41
5. Air quality	5.35	1.61	5.29	1.47	5.17	1.55	0.60
6. Reg. climate	5.10	1.54	5.12	1.56	5.15	1.55	0.81
7. Open spaces	4.95	1.50	4.86	1.40	4.78	1.30	0.64
8. Fishing/wildlife	4.80	1.39	4.96	1.37	4.50	1.43	3.40*
9. Low tax rates	4.81	1.38	4.56	1.51	4.45	1.65	1.94
10. Shopping opp.	4.65	1.23	4.45	1.16	4.46	1.06	0.70
Environment Comp.	5.43	1.17	5.31	1.42	5.16	1.11	2.98*
Economic Comp.	5.22	1.05	4.71	1.66	5.10	0.99	0.46

Note: The question asked the respondent to rate the importance of each factor in the quality of life of rural residents. A 7-point scale was used allowing the calculation of mean scores.

* $P < 0.10$. Relationships remained after controlling for income, age and education.

quality of life equation of rural communities between rural-based and urban-based economic development officials (see Table 1).

Proposition 2: ratings of rural policy choices

Table 2 demonstrates that rural-based officials are significantly more supportive of environmentally based policy choices. This includes the individual choice of ‘emphasize conserving and improving natural productivity of the soils to grow more food’ ($F = 4.53$) and the environmental composite measure ($F = 3.54$). We can reject proposition 2(B), which asserts no difference between respondents on their ratings of the environmentally sensitive policies. We found no differences in respondents ratings of anti-environmental policy choices, so proposition 2(A) is not rejected. Please note that the respondents as a group strongly endorse the environmental choices compared to the anti-environmental choices. The only exception is that respondents believe that we should ‘emphasize using nature to produce goods we use’ rather than ‘emphasize preserving nature for its own sake’.

Proposition 3: ratings of environmental impact of development

There was no significant difference in respondents’ ratings of the importance of the potential adverse effect of development on the environment. We cannot reject proposition 3 (see Table 3).

Proposition 4: ratings of economic development strategies

In Table 4, rural-based officials had higher ratings of economic development strategies that encourage economic development from the inside as compared to their urban counterparts (F on the composite score is 2.89). These higher ratings were consistent across all inside development strategies and the composite score. It should be noted, however, that all respondents strongly favored this type of development strategy compared to development that encourages development from the outside. We can reject proposition 4 but note the importance of the previous sentence.

Table 2. Respondents’ ratings of future rural community policy and the environment

Policy	Population			F-test
	Under 5000 Mean (S.D.)	5000–49,999 Mean (S.D.)	50,000 + Mean (S.D.)	
Cluster 1:				
Emphasize that econ. growth is more important than the environment	2.73 (1.64)	2.59 (1.36)	2.66 (1.43)	0.03
Emphasize that env. protection is more important than econ. growth	3.45 (1.72)	3.80 (1.51)	3.47 (1.67)	0.09
Cluster 2:				
Emphasize using nature to produce goods we use	4.98 (1.42)	4.72 (1.30)	4.82 (1.33)	0.32
Emphasize preserving nature for its own sake	4.13 (1.96)	4.39 (1.69)	4.05 (1.53)	0.37
Cluster 3:				
Emphasize using resources to benefit the present generation	3.46 (1.57)	3.56 (1.52)	3.29 (1.34)	1.17
Emphasize saving resources to benefit future generations	5.73 (1.25)	5.42 (1.46)	5.40 (1.31)	1.93
Cluster 4:				
Emphasize the use of chemical and farm tech. to grow more food	3.30 (1.84)	3.24 (1.59)	3.17 (1.57)	0.30
Emphasize conserving and improving natural productivity of the soils to grow more food	5.65 (1.46)	5.44 (1.41)	5.27 (1.42)	4.53*
Environment Comp.	4.74 (1.13)	4.76 (0.80)	4.55 (0.94)	3.54*
Economic Comp.	3.62 (0.96)	3.53 (0.89)	3.86 (1.12)	0.19

Note: Some of this data appears in McBeth (forthcoming). The analysis of the data in this study, however, is original.
* $P < 0.10$. Relationships remained after controlling for income, age, and education.

Table 3. Respondents' ratings of the impact of development on environment

'The following are some factors to consider when a commercial or industrial development opportunity presents itself to a rural area. Please rate the importance of these on a scale of 1 to 7.'

	Population			F-test
	Under 5000 Mean (S.D.)	5000-49,999 Mean (S.D.)	50,000 + Mean (S.D.)	
The potential adverse effect on the environment	5.69 (1.35)	5.69 (1.23)	5.52 (1.21)	0.98

Note: The question was scaled from 1 (very unimportant) to 7 (very important).

Proposition 5: responses to population growth

Proposition 6: responses to citizen influence

There was no association on the question concerning economic well-being and population growth (see Table 5). We fail to reject proposition 5.

In Table 6, we see that there was no statistical difference between rural/urban officials and attitudes about how much influence citizens should

Table 4. Respondents' ratings of economic development strategies

	Population			F-test
	Under 5000 Mean (S.D.)	5001-49,999 Mean (S.D.)	50,000 + Mean (S.D.)	
Inside development:				
Small business creation	6.29 (0.66)	5.91 (0.86)	6.06 (0.95)	2.74*
Retention/expansion	6.41 (0.77)	6.34 (0.85)	6.13 (1.03)	4.48**
Home-based business	5.70 (1.06)	5.42 (1.14)	5.37 (1.13)	3.15*
Outside development:				
Industrial recruitment	3.30 (1.98)	3.47 (1.70)	3.57 (1.63)	0.99
Tourism development	4.97 (1.32)	5.05 (1.19)	5.10 (1.28)	0.41
Retirement residents	4.35 (1.58)	4.41 (1.45)	4.47 (1.29)	0.27
Inside comp.	6.13 (0.83)	5.89 (0.46)	5.85 (1.03)	2.89**
Outside comp.	4.20 (1.62)	4.31 (0.79)	4.38 (1.40)	0.46

* $P < 0.10$; ** $P < 0.05$. The relationships remained after controlling for income, age, and education.

Table 5. Respondents' views of economic well-being and growth

Choice	Population			
	Under 5000	5000-49,999	50,000 +	
Economic well-being is possible w/out pop. growth	48 (80%)	92 (83%)	82 (74%)	222
Economic well-being is <i>not</i> possible w/out pop. growth	12 (20%)	19 (17%)	29 (26%)	60
Total	60	111	111	282
Chi-square				3.03
df				2

Note: Chi-square is not significant.

Table 6. Respondents' views of citizen influence over development policy

'How much influence should local citizens have over the formation of local economic development policy?'

Choices	Population		
	Under 5000	5001–49,999	50,000 +
Total influence (100%)	15 (24%)	18 (15%)	10 (0.08%)
Great deal (80%)	25 (40%)	65 (54%)	73 (58%)
Quite a bit (60%)	16 (25%)	28 (23%)	32 (26%)
Middle (50%)	4 (0.06%)	4 (0.03%)	6 (0.05%)
Some (40%)	2 (0.03%)	5 (0.04%)	4 (0.03%)
Small (20%)	1 (0.02%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
None (0%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Mean	2.30	2.28	2.37
S.D.	1.10	0.90	0.82
F-test			0.36

Notes: The responses were coded from 1 (total influence) to 7 (no influence). There is no significant relationship.

have in the formation of local development policy. We cannot reject proposition 6.

Implications for rural development policy

What do these findings mean when related back to our central question of the desirability of decentralizing economic development policy and the potential results of this action on environmental preservation? First, there is no support for the notion that urban-based rural economic development policy-makers are more environmentally concerned to their rural counterparts. This is surprising, given the fact that the majority of urban-based officials are more educated, have a higher income, and are younger. These are all factors traditionally related to higher levels of environmental concern in the general population. In our sample, rural-based officials were more likely to see the importance of environmental quality of life features in the lives of rural residents. This is an interesting and potentially important finding, for it suggests that rural-based officials have a better pulse of their residents' quality of life choices. Empirical studies have demonstrated the importance of environmental quality of life factors in the lives of rural residents (e.g. Willits *et al.*, 1990; Hummon, 1990).

Rural-based officials' stronger ratings of 'emphasizing saving resources for future generations' suggests an understanding of sustainable development principles. The stronger emphasis that rural officials place on inside development strategies further indicates that decentralization of economic development policy would not necessarily be harmful to the environment and in fact may well be beneficial to environmental preservation. Finally, rural officials seem more willing to allow rural residents to influence local development policy.

It is important, however, to remember that this sample represents only rural development policy-makers and practitioners and not rural residents. Sustainable economic development argues that citizens must direct policy-making. Citizens in rural communities are well aware that survival is only possible if their communities are somehow reinvented. They know things cannot be what they were in the past, and they know that community survival must rest on a new economic and social base. The fundamental point is that the new base must be invented by the rural communities themselves. It cannot be imposed on them by outside environmental interest groups or by corporate interests hoping to get a few tons of ore from the mines or trees from the forest. It also cannot be imposed on them by well-meaning state or federal policy-makers and practitioners.

This, in fact, may be the greatest danger of reinventing rural communities. An army of administrators and consultants from the federal government, state governments, granting agencies, and universities has descended on rural communities with the promise of aiding them in their economic development efforts. All too often these administrators and consultants end up guiding the process, setting the goals, and choosing among alternatives. They are well meaning and helpful. Rural communities have part-time political leadership as a rule, and it is easy for bureaucrats and consultants to take over the local economic development process. It is easier for them to do it themselves than it is for them to help communities establish a process that allows the community to reinvent itself. Doing it the economic development practitioner's way is easier and fits the result-oriented demands of granting agencies and state political leaders. It is also ineffective, counterproductive, and results in only short-term and shallow change.

Sixty-seven percent of the sample believes that rural residents should have at least a 'great deal' of influence in the formulation of local economic development policy. This finding suggests that decentralization of policy choices is favored by policy-makers and practitioners themselves.* If this decentralization were to occur, the role of the economic development policy-maker and practitioner would and must fundamentally change. These officials' role would change from one of policy expert to one of policy facilitator.

Where do we go from here?

These data suggest that decentralization of rural economic development policy to rural-based officials would not have detrimental environmental consequences. Still, there is always the worry that elites such as those studied here may possess stronger environmental attitudes compared to rural citizens. A national data base that compares the environmental attitudes of rural citizens with this data base of rural economic development officials would go a long way toward finally answering the question of rural citizens' commitment to environmental preservation, as well as their own economic well-being.

References

- Alm, L. R. and Witt, S. L. (1994) Environmental policy in the intermountain west: the rural-urban linkage. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Albuquerque.
- Buttel, F. H. (1975) The environmental movement: consensus, conflict and change. *Journal of Environmental Education* 7, 53-63.
- Buttel, F. H. and Flinn, W. L. (1974) The structure of support for the environmental movement, 1968-1970. *Rural Sociology* 39, 56-69.
- Fortmann, L. and Kusel, J. (1990) New voices, old beliefs: forest environmentalism among new and long-standing rural residents. *Rural Sociology* 55, 214-232.
- Hummon, D. (1990) *Commonplaces: Community Ideology and Identity in American Culture*. New York State Press, New York.
- Johnson, J. D. and Rasker, R. (1993) Local government: local business climate and quality of life. *Montana Policy Review* 3, 11-19.
- Johnson, K. (1993) *Beyond Polarization: Strategies for Reconciling Community and Environment*. Northwest Policy Center, Seattle.
- Jones, R. E. and Dunlap, R. E. (1992) The social bases of environmental concern: have they changed over time? *Rural Sociology* 57, 28-47.
- Kinsley, M. (1993) Sustainable development: Prosperity without growth. *Pacific Mountain Review*, 14-17.
- Lowe, G. D. and Pinhey, T. K. (1982) Rural-urban differences in support for environmental protection. *Rural Sociology* 47, 114-128.
- McBeth, M. K. (1995) Environmental and economic development attitudes: an empirical analysis. *Economic Development Quarterly* 9, 39-49.
- McBeth, M. K. (1996) The greening of rural development officials: a call for research. *Journal of the Community Development Society* 27.
- McBeth, M. K. and Foster, R. H. (1994) Rural environmental attitudes. *Environmental Management* 18, 401-412.
- Mohai, P. (1985) Public concern and elite involvement in environmental conservation issues. *Social Science Quarterly* 66, 820-838.
- Powers, T. (1988) *The Economic Pursuit of Quality*. Sharpe, Armonk, NY.
- Reisner, M. (1986) *Cadillac Desert*. Viking Penguin, New York.
- Rudzitis, G. and Johansen, H. E. (1991) How important is wilderness? Results from a United States survey. *Environmental Management* 15, 227-233.
- Rural Development Policy Makers and Practitioners (1993) Corporation for Enterprise Development, Washington, D.C.
- Stegner, W. (1987) *The American West as Living Space*. University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.
- Tremblay, K. R. and Dunlap, R. E. (1978) Rural residence and concern with environmental quality: a replication and extension. *Rural Sociology* 43, 474-491.
- Willits, F. K. and Crider, D. M. (1993) Pennsylvanians view economic development: a ten year perspective. *Journal of the Community Development Society* 24, 30-45.
- Willits, F. K., Bealer, R. C. and Timbers, V. (1990) Popular images of 'rurality': data from a Pennsylvania survey. *Rural Sociology* 55, 559-578.
- Worster, D. (1979) *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*. Pantheon, New York.
- Worster, D. (1986) *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity and the Growth of the American West*. Pantheon, New York.

*The fact that economic development practitioners favor decentralization of economic development policy does not tell us a lot. Some practitioners may favor decentralization because they feel that rural residents will, in turn, call for more aggressive anti-environmental development strategies. Previous studies suggest that citizens would not favor anti-environmental development strategies (McBeth, 1995). Local elites who may camouflage their policy choices as the 'public choice' may aggressively pursue anti-environmental growth strategies. The data on the environmental concern of rural residents when pursuing economic development strategies are limited, and more national research is needed on the subject.

Appendix

Table A1. Profile of respondents

	Sample	Under 5000	5000–49,999	50,000 +
<i>Region</i>				
Northeast	70 (23%)	15 (24%)	29 (24%)	26 (21%)
South	47 (15%)	8 (13%)	10 (0.08%)	29 (23%)
Mideast	26 (0.08%)	8 (13%)	13 (11%)	5 (0.04%)
Southwest	46 (15%)	13 (21%)	15 (13%)	18 (14%)
Rockies/plains	62 (20%)	10 (16%)	29 (24%)	23 (18%)
Northwest/west	57 (19%)	9 (14%)	24 (20%)	24 (19%)
<i>Organization</i>				
Educ. org.	67 (22%)	10 (16%)	34 (28%)	23 (18%)
Funding	9 (0.03%)	2 (0.03%)	6 (0.05%)	1 (0.01%)
State gov.	75 (21%)	11 (17%)	31 (25%)	33 (26%)
University	22 (0.07%)	3 (0.05%)	7 (0.06%)	12 (10%)
Legislature	11 (0.01%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (0.03%)	8 (0.06%)
Natl. assoc.	4 (0.01%)	2 (0.03%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (0.02%)
Nonprofit	67 (23%)	18 (29%)	27 (23%)	22 (18%)
Private/util.	27 (0.08%)	9 (14%)	9 (0.08%)	9 (0.07%)
Other	26 (10%)	8 (13%)	3 (0.03%)	15 (12%)
<i>Population (ave.)</i>	156,060	2548	23,115	359,752
<i>Gender</i>				
Female	81 (27%)	20 (32%)	31 (26%)	30 (24%)
Male	225 (73%)	42 (68%)	88 (74%)	95 (76%)
<i>Age (ave.)</i>	47.46	49.12	46.83	47.45
<i>Education/years (ave.)</i>	17.97	16.93	18.16	18.27
<i>Educational background</i>				
Liberal arts/social sci.	108 (37%)	21 (38%)	40 (35%)	47 (40%)
Business	42 (14%)	5 (0.09%)	19 (17%)	18 (15%)
Public admin.	49 (17%)	6 (11%)	17 (15%)	26 (22%)
Natural sci.	46 (16%)	14 (26%)	15 (13%)	14 (12%)
Engineering	14 (0.05%)	4 (0.07%)	8 (0.07%)	2 (0.02%)
Other	32 (11%)	5 (0.09%)	16 (14%)	11 (0.09%)
<i>Annual income (ave.)</i>	\$60,695	\$53,696	\$58,642	\$65,614
<i>Years in E.D. (ave.)</i>	17.97	13.49	12.27	14.51