

Amenity landownership, land use change and the re-creation of “working landscapes”

Running head: Amenity landownership and working landscapes

Jesse Abrams*

Department of Sociology and Environmental Studies Program

Whitman College

345 Boyer Ave.

Walla Walla, WA 99362

541-231-3556

jesse.b.abrams@gmail.com

abramsjb@whitman.edu

John Bliss*

Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society

Oregon State University

321 Richardson Hall

Corvallis, OR 97331

541-737-4427

john.bliss@oregonstate.edu

Abstract: In recent years the “working landscape” concept has risen to prominence in popular, academic, and policy discourse surrounding conservation of both natural and cultural values in inhabited landscapes. Despite its implied reconciliation of commodity production and environmental protection, this concept remains contested terrain, masking tensions over land use practices and understandings of human-nature relations. Here we draw on a case study of land ownership and land use change in remote, rural Wallowa County, Oregon to explore how working landscapes are envisioned and enacted by various actors. The arrival of landowning amenity migrants, many of whom actively endorsed a working landscape vision, resulted in subtle but significant transformations in land use practices and altered opportunities for local producers. The working landscape ideal, while replete with tensions and contradictions, nevertheless functioned as an important alternative vision to the rural gentrification characteristic of other scenic Western environs.

KEYWORDS: amenity migration, discourse, land use, rural gentrification, working landscape

Introduction

Over the past four decades, demographers, rural sociologists, and geographers have analyzed significant transformations affecting rural landscapes across the developed world.

Interpreted as instances of “counterurbanization,” “amenity migration,” or “rural gentrification,”

these transitions are characterized by the seasonal or permanent movement of affluent urban or suburban populations to landscapes formerly dedicated to commodity production activities such as farming, ranching, logging, and mining (Gosnell and Abrams 2011). The results of such population movements include restructuring of local rural economies (Nelson 1997), political and cultural conflicts (Hurley in press, Hurley and Walker 2004; Walker and Fortmann 2003), the transfer and, in some cases, subdivision of rural lands (Gill et al. 2010; Gosnell et al. 2006; Yung and Belsky 2007), and land use changes consistent with a transition from “productivist” to “multifunctional” activities (McCarthy 2005; Holmes 2006).

Much of the literature on amenity-driven rural change frames the phenomenon in stark terms, as a transition from “landscapes of production” to “landscapes of consumption” (Walker and Fortmann 2003; Slee 2005; Salamon 2006) as rural landscapes are “re-created” (Abram et al. 1998) through the ideals and actions of economically, politically, and culturally powerful urban elites. Yet the precise forms such processes of landscape re-creation take are highly variable across contexts, and the boundaries between production activities on the one hand and the consumption and protection activities typically associated with amenity migration on the other (Holmes 2006) may not be readily apparent (Gill et al. 2010). Such blurring of productivist and non-productivist (i.e., consumptive or protective) land uses may be particularly prominent in the context of rural multifunctionality, where “working landscapes” imply a mix of market and non-market social benefits (Hall et al. 2004). Indeed, the very concept of the working landscape has risen to prominence in popular, academic and policy discourse as an alternative to dominant conservation framings which assume an either/or choice between ecological protection and the continuation of culturally and economically important production practices (Cannavò 2007; Hurley et al. 2002; McCarthy 2005; Huntsinger and Sayre 2007; Wolf and Klein 2007).

In this article, we explore how working landscape visions are both articulated (through discourse) and enacted (through land uses) by amenity-oriented landowners, agricultural and forestry producers, and various intermediaries in the gentrifying rural arena of Wallowa County, Oregon. We contend that specific attention to the working landscape is warranted, despite the abundance of published literature on closely-related concepts such as rural multifunctionality (Holmes 2006; Wilson 2007). Unlike multifunctionality, the working landscape concept has penetrated both academic and popular discourse and is increasingly prevalent among NGOs and practitioners (see, e.g., Huntsinger and Sayre 2007). This term may obscure more than it reveals about changing patterns of land access and use, however. It is therefore important to unpack the multiple and varied meanings, contradictions, tensions, and implicit assumptions wrapped up in the ideal of the working landscape.

Landscape and working landscape

The landscape concept informs a diverse literature on the interrelations between social constructions of the environment and material conditions and practices (e.g. landforms, land uses) in particular geographical spaces (Bunce 1994; Cosgrove 1984; Greider and Garkovich 1994; Walker and Fortmann 2003; Zukin 1991). Cosgrove (2006) connects the landscape concept in the western tradition to nostalgia, the painful longing for, and attempts to re-create, the environmental and social patterns of rural regions whose contours were (and continue to be) drastically altered by capitalist transformations. The landscape perspective characteristically reflects a privileged vantage point; it is “a distanced way of seeing, the outsider’s perspective which, for all its appeal to direct human experiences, articulated them ideologically within a period of change from land as use for the reproduction of human life to land as commodity for

realising exchange value” (Cosgrove 1984, p. 161). Bunce (1994, p. 14) identifies two broad threads of a shared English and American landscape ideal which arose initially among the emerging middle classes of the nineteenth century: a critique and rejection of “urbanism and industrial progress” and a romantic “idealisation of nature and country life.” The core of this transatlantic rural landscape is “an idea which romanticises pre-industrial culture, casting the traditional rural lifestyle and communities of the past in nostalgic contrast to the dynamic and individualistic culture of the present” (Bunce 1994, p. 29).

Understandings of nature and of normative human-nature relationships (including economic forms and their implications for land use) are central concerns in the exploration of landscapes as social constructions (Greider and Garkovich 1994). Within the American tradition, this appears perhaps most distinctively in the concept of wilderness, an imagined space of pure, de-humanized nature, variably cast in threatening, sublime, and sacred terms (Nash 1967; Cronon 1995). Understandings of wilderness as spiritual refuge and as sacred ground in need of protection from human alteration largely track the rise of industrialization and its associated social and environmental effects; as the North American continent was urbanized, industrialized, rationalized, and “civilized,” wilderness increasingly came to represent the antithesis of modernity and its associated ills (Nash 1967).

Situated between the extremes of uncultivated wilderness and runaway capitalist development, according to Leo Marx (1964), is another quintessentially American¹ ideal, that of the “middle landscape.” The pastoral ideal of the middle landscape represents a hoped-for reconciliation of the contradictions between an asocial nature and an anti-natural capitalist political economy. This vision of American rurality as “a peaceful, lovely, classless, bountiful pasture” (p. 116), producing independence and civic virtue in its citizens yet constantly

threatened by the horrors of industrial development, appears in various guises from Crèvecoeur through Thomas Jefferson to Thoreau, Twain, and Melville (Marx 1964) and continues to exert an influence in contemporary environmental disputes (Phadke 2011). The “working landscape” is only the latest incarnation of Leo Marx’s middle landscape. Typically defined in terms of extensive (rather than intensive) pastoral, agricultural, and forestry land uses, the working landscape takes on a particular role in the context of amenity migration and rural gentrification.

Cannavò (2007, p. 220) defines the term as generally referring to “agricultural lands characterized by a long-standing balance between human and natural forces...a working landscape is exemplified by a historic countryside that displays an intricate combination of cultivation and natural habitat.” Cannavò clearly has a middle landscape in mind when he situates the working landscape halfway between the American traditions of “founding,” with its implications of development and unrestrained environmental alteration, and “preservation,” with its imaginary of an asocial nature. Yet this is more than simply an ideal; the conservation values associated with working landscapes have recently been touted by ecologists (Knight et al. 1995; Maestas et al. 2001) and social scientists (Sayre 2005) and given formal recognition by the IUCN (Brown and Mitchell 2000). The elevation of the working landscape concept would seem to offer an alternative to the “preservation versus production” debate which typically dominates much of contemporary natural resource decision-making. Yet defining the working landscape in specific places is frequently a contentious process, characterized by competing claims of authenticity (Abrams and Gosnell 2012), understandings of nature (Hurley in press, Wolf and Klein 2007), and interests in promoting or revising historic land uses (Hurley et al. 2002). Understanding how the working landscape is re-created in particular settings requires consideration of a broad range

of influences and attention to the uneven character of such transformations (Abrams et al. In Press).

Wallowa County's Working Landscape

Wallowa County is located in the remote northeast corner of the state of Oregon, bounded by Hells Canyon to the east, the Wallowa Mountain range to the south, and deeply dissected hill and canyon topography to the north and west. Long a peripheral region, the county's economy has been heavily tied to timber and agriculture ever since the first wave of EuroAmerican settlers forcibly displaced the indigenous Nez Perce in the late nineteenth century. While the county's most productive timberlands have been controlled by either extralocal corporate entities or the federal government since the early 1900s, farms, ranches, and marginal timberlands largely remained in the hands of independent family operators through the twentieth century (Abrams 2011). Grazing by sheep and, later, beef cattle have been dominant land uses across the county's semiarid rangelands for over a century. Rotational crops of wheat, barley, and other frost-hardy species have historically been important on both irrigated and dryland farms. Some of the most substantial transformations to the county's economy and demographics came in the 1990s when strict implementation of environmental policies forced a virtual shutdown of federal timber harvesting, eventually contributing to the shuttering of all three local sawmills. Farm income also declined from peaks in the early 1970s, leaving agricultural and forestry producers with few economic options either on-farm or off-farm in the local community. Relatively well-paying manufacturing jobs were replaced largely with seasonal, low-paying service-sector jobs following this round of rural restructuring (Christoffersen 2005), and transfer payments grew to account for an ever-greater share of county income. U.S. Bureau of Economic

Analysis data show that the number of farm jobs in Wallowa County declined from 873 total jobs in 1969 to 598 jobs in 2009. The importance of transfer receipts as a share of total county income increased from 26.7% in 1969 to 54.9% in 2009.

The county's picturesque setting, abundant wildlife, and access to outdoor recreation (including three Wilderness Areas, a National Recreation Area, and several state-owned parks and wildlife areas) have been draws for tourists, hunters, and amenity migrants for decades, yet its remote location has discouraged large-scale exurbanization and in-migration. Land ownership and use transitions here mirror those documented in other remote rural regions of the arid intermountain West (see, e.g., Gosnell et al. 2006; Gosnell and Travis 2005; Haggerty and Travis 2006; Yung and Belsky 2007) in which large tracts of farm, ranch, and forest land transfer from production-oriented families to amenity owners. This trend was especially prevalent from roughly 2000 through 2008, during which time over 130,000 acres of land were purchased by (or deeded to) those with addresses outside Wallowa County at the time of purchase (figure 1). The array of amenity landowners here includes retired professionals, "lone eagles" who work remotely via internet and telephone, wealthy entrepreneurs and businesspeople, and a number of individuals from middle-class backgrounds who were able to purchase modest estates on remote or unproductive terrain. Residential patterns of these amenity owners include both year-round and seasonal tenure.

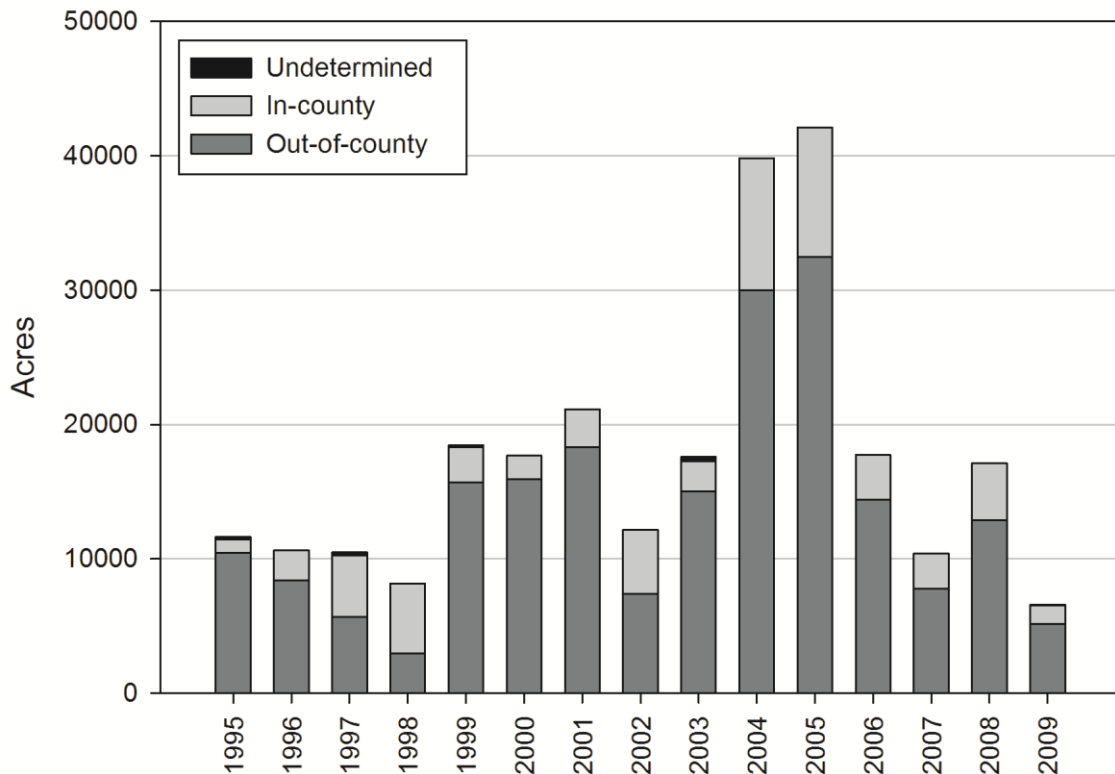


Figure 1. Annual acreage of Wallowa County nonindustrial private land transferred to new owners, 1995-2009, stratified by the primary address of the grantee at the time of transfer. Data source: Wallowa County Tax Assessor's Office.

The working landscape ideal in Wallowa County was reflected in the outcome of a 2006 countywide visioning process (including both amenity migrants and long-time local residents), which concluded, in part, “Together we value wide-open spaces and intact ranchlands. We create opportunities to carry agriculture and ranching forward into the next generation” (Wallowa County Economic Action Team 2007, p. 6). This visioning process was organized as part of a larger community assessment conducted by a team of rural development specialists. The terms “working lands” and “working landscape” appear 20 times within the resulting 49 page assessment document, largely in reference to the traditional EuroAmerican land uses of farming, livestock grazing and forestry as they occur on nonindustrial lands. Threats to the working

landscape identified by the rural development team include “parcelization and fragmentation” (p. 12) related to real estate development, as well as “new residents uninterested in, or even hostile to, agriculture” (p. 14). The working landscape concept is likewise central to the discourse of local NGOs and governance entities, and emerged frequently in interviews with Wallowa County residents and landowners conducted for the present study. While amenity owners and producers alike expressed discursive support for the continuation of a working landscape (broadly defined), the precise contours of the Wallowa County landscape were, and continue to be, highly dependent on the specific patterns of land use and access enacted by individual owners.

Methods

For this case study, 51 semi-structured key informant interviews were conducted with 70 individuals between 2008 and 2010. Interviewees were initially chosen from a random sample, drawn from the Wallowa County tax lot database, of landowners of at least 40 acres of land. The 40 acre minimum was chosen so as to exclude those whose properties are too small to effectively manage for agricultural or forestry objectives. Following this first round, further interviewees were chosen selectively for their insights regarding the phenomena of land ownership change and land use change, often based on snowball sampling from the initial interviewees (see Klepeis et al. 2009 for a similar methodology).

Of the 70 individuals ultimately interviewed, 50 were landowners (either titleholders or members of a family trust or LLC). Twenty-seven of these can be considered to be “amenity owners” in line with Gosnell and Travis’ (2005) definition of amenity ranch owners as those who own land “for ambience, recreation, and other amenities, not primarily for agricultural production.” Amenity owners in the present study generally possessed little to no previous

experience managing large land parcels. Twenty-three of the interviewees were “production-oriented” landowners, meaning that the production and sale of agricultural and forest commodities was important economically and/or culturally. Eleven of the amenity owners were seasonal residents of Wallowa County at the time of our interview, and the other 16 were year-round residents. Their deeded land holdings ranged from 39 to over 10,000 acres. Two of the production-oriented owners were seasonal residents and the other 21 were year-round residents. Their deeded holdings ranged from 70 to over 10,000 acres (many producers also leased private land and/or held public land grazing allotments). The remaining twenty interviewees were key stakeholders in positions such as cooperative extension, weed control, local government, land use advocacy, and renters or managers for local landowners.

Interviews ranged from less than one to three hours in length, and were recorded and transcribed verbatim (one interview was not recorded per the request of the interviewee). Many landowner interviews also included walking or driving tours of their property. Interviews were transcribed and coded using iterative rounds of “open” and later “closed” coding techniques, based on a grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2006). This process was used to identify common themes and trends in the data, as well as to analyze landscape ideals, land use decision-making processes and other relevant narrative elements within individual interviews. Note that the names associated with interview excerpts are pseudonyms used to protect interviewees’ identities.

Imagining the working landscape

Wallowa County’s particular configuration of public and private land holdings (contributing abundant “open space”), agricultural land uses (contributing pastoral scenery), and

topographic / ecological characteristics (contributing vistas of wild nature) acted as key components of particular landscape imaginaries among amenity landowners. Yet these primarily visual elements gained meaning through the broader social and economic context of the county, specifically its low population, lack of heavy industry, and deliberative planning framework. Besides standing in stark contrast to urban and suburban landscapes, Wallowa County was also situated in the minds of many amenity landowners as the antithesis of the kind of amenity-driven transformations that have come to dominate many scenic Western settings. In this context, amenity landowners typically envisioned the local working landscape as an “authentically” rural place in contrast to the residential development, landscape fragmentation, and population growth they associated with rural gentrification. In many ways, the working lands ideal for urban migrants represented a vision of rural space as insulated from the insidious effects of modernity on both urban and rural environments:

Personally I see a food crisis coming in this country here pretty soon because of how we've gone away from sustainable agriculture and we've gone to the point where beautiful farms and rich productive farms are going underneath housing developments. And that's, again, that's one of the reasons we moved [to Wallowa County]...I don't see developers ever coming in here, because the people that I've met so far are hardcore farmers and ranchers and it's in their blood, they've been doing it, that's all they know and that's all they're interested in doing, and I don't think, I don't really believe it's ever going to change down here. [Frank, year-round amenity owner]

I don't want to take [my property] and turn it into a walled garden and lock everything out, I mean it's just part of the reason I like [Wallowa County] is that the way it's integrated, the use of the land and the people living on it and stuff like that. And so I felt I had basically an obligation to kind of continue working it. This was timber property for a ranch down in the valley and even though they didn't significantly use it for that I'm trying to develop it as timber property...And even though I want to use it recreationally I also don't – like I said I'm trying to avoid a walled garden. [Thomas, seasonal amenity owner]

Excerpts such as these illustrate that many Wallowa County amenity landowners were keenly aware of the potential for losing an “authentic” rural landscape (defined by its “working” character) under the pressures of residential development, land ownership change and economic restructuring. Traditional EuroAmerican land uses such as farming, livestock grazing and timber harvesting were constructed both as indicators of authenticity and as bulwarks against gentrification. As the second excerpt illustrates, amenity owners were often quite self-reflexive about their own role in the gentrification process, recognizing that the land use decisions they made carried implications for the continuation of the county's working landscape.

Importantly, however, this self awareness did not translate into an uncritical embrace of conventional, productivist land uses. Rather, amenity landowners often struggled to reconcile their support for an “authentic,” ungentrified working landscape with their own desires to enact what they viewed as environmental improvements of their properties. Indeed, even as the working landscape was envisioned in terms of an idealized agrarian (i.e., preindustrial) political economy, many amenity migrants expressed a sense that only those whose livelihoods were not

dependent on production income could make sound environmental stewardship decisions. This latter narrative acknowledges the location of agricultural and forestry producers within the commodity chain of contemporary capitalism, and draws linkages between production practices and environmental degradation. Andrew, an amenity owner who acknowledged his own role in local gentrification and lamented the loss of traditional land users and uses, nevertheless defended his particular economic relation to the land:

I think that during my time here [this part of the county has] gone from being a working landscape to a hobby landscape...I think, in my opinion, the majority of people now are people like me, that don't have to, they choose to make their living, or they choose to spend their time playing at ag stuff.

[Interviewer]: Just to play the devil's advocate, maybe that's not a bad thing.

I don't think it's a bad thing. It's easier on the land...it's way easier on the ground because you don't have to take your pastures down to five or ten percent. I can leave it at thirty five, better get your f--king cows off my property, because I don't have to put shoes on my kids' feet for the last ten percent of that pasture...

Allen, an absentee amenity landowner who chose to purchase land in Wallowa County in part because he was looking for, in his words, a "traditional, rural, agrarian economy and area," expressed both an idyllic preindustrial agrarian vision and a postindustrial vision of economic independence from production:

My land management will be, I want to continue to use the land for agrarian purposes. I don't anticipate I'm going to be a huge livestock producer, but we're going to have some cows running around, maybe that some of them are our cows, some of them we'll be leasing the grounds to probably [the neighbors] who, their ranch backs up on the back side of ours. So I'm trying to manage the land to preserve the quality of the land or to build the quality of the land because we've got some weed issues and some things like that and to keep the land functioning in an agricultural purpose.

After establishing support for the idea of maintaining traditional agrarian uses, Allen later voiced concern about the negative implications of allowing economic motivations to guide land use:

[Interviewer:] So it would be fair to say that your approach to the forest is to do some harvesting as needed for forest health rather than harvesting for income?

Yeah, yep. Correct. That's exactly what my game plan is, I will harvest to keep the forest healthy and, correct, I won't do so for the economic value. Hopefully I won't...you never know what might happen but hopefully I won't do it for the economic value.

The comparison of these two excerpts by the same landowner reveals a fundamental contradiction in the working landscape ideal, one shared by many urban migrants. The first excerpt, taken in the context of his earlier statements of support for traditional agrarian activities, indicates an idealization of the traditional models of land ownership and use: here, families

whose livelihoods remain tied to the land and to productive practices are seen to foster a healthy, functional landscape. In the second, Allen indicts the notion of economic dependence on the land as potentially leading to degradation. Under this latter model, proper land stewardship arises not from a livelihood tied to the land, but from its opposite: the economic independence to make stewardship decisions free from the corrupting influence of monetary considerations. Thus, in spite of strong discursive support among many amenity migrants for a “traditional” and “authentic” working landscape, this support existed in tension with a fundamental discomfort regarding the environmental implications of conventional productivist practices and livelihoods.

Importantly, what appeared to amenity owners as the enactment of sound landscape stewardship often appeared to producers and long-term rural residents as neglect and a lack of proper management. Many producers took issue with the idea that economic independence from production leads to better stewardship; their perspective held that the lack of an economic nexus with the land leads to deterioration. In this sense, the tension between environmental stewardship and economic activity—the tension at the heart of the amenity vision of a working landscape—was absent from the discourse of many producers. Consider how Sam and Doris, two multigenerational Wallowa County producers, described land stewardship among neighboring seasonal amenity owners:

Sam: Well that’s the big thing for me of these absentee landowners is that the property doesn’t get taken care of in the same fashion as it has been taken care of. People that live here, and the land is their sole survival, they take care of the land. And those people that are absentee landowners just don’t have that – I don’t know what you call it. They just don’t – they just aren’t here to see it being taken care of I guess.

Doris: Well they don't have to rely on it for anything –

Sam: Yeah they don't have to rely on it.

Doris: That's not their sole source of income so they – it's not anything that they really have to take care of I guess so to speak.

Sam: When you talk to them, they'll tell you “Oh yeah we're going to take care of this and we're going to do this and we're going to do that” but in actuality it never happens. I mean they work at it in their own little way of doing things but it's not like it has been taken care of in the past years...

While these remarks were directly specifically at absentee amenity owners (not amenity owners as a whole), they highlight a broad social construction shared among the production-oriented landowners interviewed for this study: specifically, that economic dependence on land-based production serves to ensure proper landscape stewardship. Sam and Doris went on to describe crumbling structures, dilapidated fences, and runaway noxious weed populations as some of the consequences of absentee amenity land ownership. This discourse unifies the health of the land and the health of traditional EuroAmerican improvements such as fencing and buildings. Amenity owners, on the other hand, tended to be more ambivalent regarding the connections between land health and the continuation of traditional land use practices.

Re-creating the working landscape

For amenity owners, translating diverse and contradictory landscape ideals into concrete management practices entailed negotiating a complex set of social, economic, and ecological constraints and incentives. Like other Oregon counties, Wallowa County provides very attractive property tax rates for rural land deemed to be contributing to agricultural or forestry production. Maintaining favorable tax status on such lands is famously easy, often requiring proof of fairly minimal levels of leasing, farm sales or, in the case of forests, simply the maintenance of tree cover. The region's ecology provides a more complex counterpoint to imported landscape ideals. Preferences for dense green forests can be complicated by fire hazard and insect epidemics in these historically frequent-fire ecosystems, and lands across the county are regularly plagued by invasive plant infestations, the treatment of which entails active chemical or mechanical intervention. Amenity landowners typically looked to local producers for expertise and labor to manage these persistent ecological problems. In many cases, these owners ceded a significant amount of land use decision-making to renters or property managers, and the latter often played important roles mediating the relationship between landscape ideals and management practices. Debra and Bill, Wallowa County producers who both leased from amenity landowners and acted as intermediaries for them (e.g., by arranging resource management and leasing arrangements between amenity owners and local producers) described typical interactions with environmentally-minded amenity landowners:

Bill: I can tell you one of the things that we focus on, which is we try to encourage people that they need to utilize their property, that they need to find a responsible person that can

either graze or farm or, depending on the type of property, to keep it in agriculture and keep it going, and because you know we've seen people that just [say], "Oh, I don't need the 400 bucks it's going to get me, I'd just as soon leave it." But it's important for, well for the families and the landscape, you know, and everything. So that's one thing that we try to encourage...

Debra: [M]ost of the people that hire us are at least open-minded enough that you kind of make the argument, "Yeah you can do damage with grazing but don't forget that these grasslands evolved under grazing by large herbivores and they do best when appropriately grazed by large herbivores," and usually people [say], "Okay, I need a couple bucks" and "I need my farm [tax] deferral"...they get nervous, you know, like "Okay, you'll make sure it's not overgrazed." Yeah, that's kind of what we do.

This deference to producer experts and intermediaries did not imply, however, a simple continuity in land uses between producers and amenity owners. While Wallowa County amenity landowners regularly found themselves admiring and even idealizing the livelihoods of their producer neighbors, they nevertheless expressed a sense of obligation to make improvements over what they saw as environmentally harmful practices associated with conventional agricultural and forestry production. Compared with conventional producers, the middle landscapes they enacted on their own properties were often tilted away from traditional productivist practices in the direction of (sometimes symbolically) "green" or "sustainable" practices. Fred and Melinda, two amenity owners of irrigated land, described their vision of good

land use by comparing their own stewardship approach with what they saw as less enlightened practices among most local farmers:

Fred: [A farmer] had farmed this piece for a long time, and they couldn't figure out why the water today wasn't as plentiful as it was back then, and one of the things they had removed was the trees, and when they removed all the trees along the streams, they removed the beaver, and the beaver ended up being the one that was doing the damming that was holding the water back that was percolating out through and letting their fields go ahead and have water throughout the summer...

Melinda: Well most of, traditionally the farmers around here don't want the trees taking the water out of the ditch, they want the water on the field. And they do, they traditionally go through and they keep, not so much the stream, they're concerned about that, but it's really the irrigation ditches that they keep scalped...And then the banks erode and then the canal breaks and you've got irrigation water everywhere, and no roots to hold it.

Fred: They'll go ahead and chop the tree down at ground level and not think about what's going on underneath with those root systems that'll stay there for 30 or 40 years but eventually it'll rot out and when they do the water will percolate through those channels and then they've got major problems, and anyway, we have since, through EQUIP [a farm conservation program], we have gone ahead and purchased trees...

Fred and Melinda went on to describe their efforts to re-establish tree cover along irrigation ditches, in addition to implementing other revisions designed to improve the ecological condition of their land (much of which is rented to a neighboring rancher).

Other amenity owners instituted similar changes on their properties, including fencing off riparian zones, replacing non-native forage or weed-infested areas with native grasses and forbs, installing more efficient irrigation systems, replacing the most common cattle breeds (Angus and Hereford) with less common breeds, eliminating or minimizing the use of chemical herbicides and pesticides, and installing organic gardens. Such revisions of productivist convention were performed as alternative models to dominant agricultural practices (cf. Holloway 2000, 2002), and a number of amenity owners reflexively framed their land uses as microcosmic models of more enlightened land management. Amenity forestland owners generally instituted some kind of active management of their forests, though this usually focused on thinning smaller and less healthy trees in order to favor the larger, older trees. Hence, across forest, range, and farm lands, amenity owners often instituted revisions to conventional productivist practices which maintained the general contours of a “working landscape,” rather than converting entirely to a consumption- or protection- oriented landscape.

In addition to land use changes instituted by the landowners themselves, amenity ownership often implied altered access arrangements for producers dependent on leased land. In this new operating environment, producers whose stewardship identities best matched the working landscape ideals of amenity migrants stood to benefit:

[Interviewer]: And then so just to clarify, do you think you'll mostly be leasing the grazing grounds?

...I don't know the answer to that. I don't think so...But if I don't graze my own animals on it then I will lease land to somebody who's doing grass-fed beef. I'm not going to lease it to somebody who's doing traditional commodity beef, I'll lease it to somebody who's doing grass-fed beef. [Allen, seasonal amenity landowner]

Note that, because the feedlots in which commodity beef cattle are typically finished are offsite, largely in neighboring counties, the cattle management that would have occurred on Allen's summer pasture would likely have been similar or identical regardless of whether the cattle were ultimately finished on grass or on grain in a feedlot. Nevertheless, Allen's sense of the environmentally superior nature of grass-finished beef and his commitment to this production model led him to make a strong distinction between the kinds of producers to whom he was and was not willing to rent.

While not a universal trait of amenity landowners, the selective granting of access to producers based on their environmental bona fides was an important means by which the working landscape was actively re-created in Wallowa County. It should be noted that other factors also influenced amenity owners' renting decisions, including the presence of pre-existing rental arrangements and renters' claims of "localism" (cf. Bell 1994), a form of symbolic capital representing a key component of rural legitimacy. The re-creation of the working landscape in Wallowa County thus occurred not only through the land uses of amenity owners themselves, but also through the changing practices of producers responding to novel economic and symbolic pressures. Amenity owners' landscape ideals privileged certain kinds of producers (environmentally progressive, yet locally rooted) and production practices (those deemed

“sustainable”). Producers who could best perform (in multiple senses of the word) were, in some cases, rewarded with preferential rental access to gentrifying lands. For producers who could not, or chose not to, engage in practices perceived to be more environmentally benign, the amenity transition primarily represented a loss of access to land rather than the creation of new opportunities. The working landscape vision produced through the ideals and practices of amenity owners thus realigned, to some degree, the economic fortunes of producers, primarily to the benefit of those whose material practices and cultural performances best reconciled urban migrants’ contradictory stances toward production, protection, and consumption.

Discussion and Conclusions

While amenity migration and landownership are not new phenomena (see, e.g., Bunce 1994), the increasing prevalence of amenity landownership in rural areas during the 1990s and 2000s raises questions about novel patterns of land use and environmental management in traditionally productivist landscapes. The expanding suite of land use possibilities reflects the particular economic position of amenity landowners: with income from other, largely non-land-based sources, amenity owners approach their properties not as livelihood assets but rather as lifestyle assets. Land use is thus implicated in the uneven re-creation of particular landscapes through the sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory positioning of various landed interests. Far from simply being translated from ideals to material realities, amenity owners’ landscape visions encounter a complex array of influences, including economic incentives, ecological constraints, and pre-existing social constructions and livelihood strategies based in agricultural and forestry production. As illustrated above, land use outcomes reflect not only the

imaginaries of landowners themselves, but also the interventions of an array of potential intermediaries and other actors (e.g., renters and property managers).

In spite of the divergent visions of the working landscape held by amenity owners and producers in Wallowa County (and the varying land uses these visions imply), the concept nevertheless remained important as an alternative vision to the more common trajectory of land use changes associated with amenity migration and rural gentrification. Despite fundamental differences between rural producers and urban migrants, there was at least a nominal interest in fostering land use continuity in the face of the amenity transition, in part due to amenity owners' embrace of a working landscape ideal and their generally high levels of self-reflexivity regarding the potential impacts of land use changes. Yet the working landscape concept remained deceptively complex, embodying tensions over identity, access to land, the sustainability of conventional productivist practices, and the political economy of agricultural and forestry production. In this case, the preindustrial agrarian ideals of amenity migrants collided with the realities of contemporary agricultural and forestry practices, compelling many amenity owners to seek new stewardship models that departed, subtly but importantly, from productivist convention. For producers who shared concerns about conventional production practices, the arrival of affluent urban migrants provided an expanded local market for alternative commodities, potential preferential access to land, and an expanded base of local legitimacy (cf. Fortmann and Kusel 1990).

The findings of this study echo those of Gill et al. (2010), among others, who contend that amenity ownership of rural lands often implies a blurring of production, consumption, and protection practices rather than a wholesale eclipse of production. The continuation of production (in variable and contested senses of the term) took on heightened meaning in

Wallowa County under the specter of gentrification and the potential loss of rural “authenticity.” Here, amenity landowners continued, broadly, to institute land uses characteristic of traditional EuroAmerican productivist practices: farming, livestock grazing, and timber harvesting. Yet they did so unevenly, and managed these uses to better align with a particular landscape vision—one which reconciles the tensions between agrarian and contemporary capitalist political economies of land use. For amenity owners, the working landscape in Wallowa County was ultimately a “landscape of reconciliation” (Marx 1964), a means of resolving the contradictions between land as a condition of capitalist production and land as space for nature, insulated from modernity.

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¹ While concepts of wilderness and the middle landscape are typically framed as quintessentially American landscape ideals, it is more accurate to label them *Euro*American ideals, near-hegemonic social constructions based in the history of European colonization of North America.

*Author affiliation and contact information August 3, 2013:

Jesse Abrams
 Ecosystem Workforce Program
 Institute for a Sustainable Environment
 130 Hendricks Hall
 5247 University of Oregon
 Eugene, OR 97403-5247
 541-346-4545
jabrams@uoregon.edu

John C. Bliss
 College of Forestry
 Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society
 Oregon State University
 140 Peavy Hall
 Corvallis, OR 97331
 541-737-4427
john.bliss@oregonstate.edu