“THIS IS HOME:” PICTURES, PLACE MEANING, AND COMMUNITY IN THE
NATURAL-AMENITY-RICH DEL NORTE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

By

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ABSTRACT

“THIS IS HOME:” PICTURES, PLACE MEANING, AND COMMUNITY IN THE NATURAL-AMENITY-RICH DEL NORTE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Erik Arndt

This study contributes to the existing, yet small, cadre of research using photo elicitation to investigate the place meanings of people living in a natural-amenity-rich area. Ten current and former residents of Del Norte County, California took pictures of and discussed in an interview the people, places, and attributes they found valuable or meaningful about that place. The primary focus of the photos and interviews was how these natural amenities, in particular Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, impacted or influenced residents’ place meanings. Three major themes of place meaning were identified from the interviews: Environment-Landscape, Human-Social, and Recreation-Exploration. Each contained multiple sub-themes that describe why participants value different places in Del Norte.

Two important conclusions were drawn from this research. First, place meanings are multidimensional constructs, most often arising from a combination of social interactions with other people and experiences with the physical environment. Second, place meanings are mutable, and may shift over the time spent in a place or due to natural- or human-caused landscape change. Many participants described Del Norte as being on the cusp of significant positive and negative changes. They saw these changes as stemming from previously quantified increases in tourism to the county, as well as
perceived future increases in permanent residents. While increasing tourism is critical to support Del Norte’s tourist economy, participants were concerned that increases in visitor and long-term populations could negatively impact the meanings they hold for Del Norte. By better understanding the place meanings of Del Norte residents’, the community and its decision-makers will be able to more effectively discuss and adapt to future changes.
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Del Norte is a place of aesthetic beauty
Del Norte is a place to escape to nature
Del Norte is a place of little human impact
Del Norte is a place to connect with the natural world
Del Norte is a place to be a steward
Del Norte is a place of environmental health
Del Norte is a place of sustenance
Del Norte is a place to explore
Del Norte is a place to recreate
Del Norte is a place to learn and educate
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This thesis bears my name, but it certainly wasn’t created in isolation, and it doesn’t belong only to me. It belongs to all of you, too. To Erin and my committee members for providing extensive feedback, guidance, and support, especially during my final semester when I was writing remotely; to Thea, Vanessa, Megan, and the other members of the graduate cohort who kept me sane, taught me how to expand my thinking and myself, and who were instrumental in refining this project; to Hannah and my parents for helping me through numerous mental roadblocks, sitting with me as I attempted to organize dozens of sticky notes, and who always made themselves available to talk through my ideas; to Brett Silver and the other RNSP staff who facilitated housing for me to conduct research in the summer and fall of 2019, helped collect disposable cameras, and who were intimately involved in the Grove of Titans research that was the genesis of this thesis; to the ten people who volunteered hours of their time to contribute their knowledge and perspectives to this research; to the countless others along the path who pointed me in the right direction; and to the land that hosted me,

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I think I’m finally starting to realize what people have been telling me is so special about this place. With my final interview in the Crescent City area now complete and no return dates on the calendar, I’m beginning to understand why people are drawn back here. Mine pales in comparison to their depth of experience, but I think that felt sense is building in me. For the fog in town, viewed from within or as you emerge from the Park. For the Smith River and the deep meaning it holds. For the redwoods, of course, they cannot be forgotten. And for this intangible sense of…something. Something simultaneously isolating and magnetic, unknown and familiar…I can’t explain it. The people who live here have hinted at it to me, so maybe it’s best to leave it to them to explain. In any case, now that I’m nearing my departure I feel a keen sense of loss. I will miss this place, and I am grateful for the time I’ve spent here.
1.1 INTRODUCTION

The idea that a person can place value on, be attached to, or find meaningful the places in which they carry out their lives has been a topic of academic interest since the 1970s. This concept of sense of place originated in environmental psychology and human geography, and over the last half-century has been adapted and developed for use in a remarkably diverse array of academic disciplines and pursuits. One of the areas of research into which it has developed is understanding how people relate to protected areas. These studies have historically been concerned with quantifying the degree to which visitors are attached to different elements of protected areas, and the implications these attachments have for land managers. Consequently, there has been less academic engagement with how long-term residents view protected areas (Stedman et al., 2004). Two other questions often given less attention include: what kinds of meanings (rather than attachments) do people have for these places, and how do place meanings for protected areas translate to the broader region in which it is located (Stedman, 2008). In this study, I will explore these under-researched questions by investigating the place meanings of long-term residents toward both a protected area and the broader region in which it is situated.

This project emerged out of a recent study that sought to investigate issues of changing visitation and impacts in Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park (Jed Smith, or the Park) due to the popularization of Grove of Titans, a collection of some of the world’s largest redwood trees (Arndt et al., 2019). In that pilot study, community members
repeatedly identified communication coming from the Park concerning impacts, proposed changes to the Park, and management decisions as issues that needed to be addressed in order to improve their mutual relationship. This gap in their relationship could be better understood by investigating the ways in which residents of Del Norte situate the Park in the broader fabric of their sense of place. This study interrogates place meanings, allowing residents to articulate why they value certain places, which can be an effective way to illuminate sources of conflict and/or opportunities within the community.

My objective with this research is to document how current and past residents of Del Norte County find meaning in that place, specifically focusing on how natural amenities and Jed Smith impact those meanings. Using a methodology that incorporates photo elicitation and in-depth interviews, this project will add to the growing number of studies that lie at the intersection of sense of place and protected areas research. It will also aid local decision-makers in their understanding of what residents currently find meaningful about Del Norte, and how those meanings impact the ways in which the area plans for the future. To these ends, my research questions are as follows:

1. How do Del Norte County residents construct place meanings in a natural-amenity-rich area?

2. In what ways does Jedediah Smith State Park factor into and/or impact residents’ place meanings?

In section 1.2, I conduct a review of the literature to introduce and situate concepts of place in this research, provide an overview of protected area research, and relate the two bodies of literature to each other. I then provide an outline of the specific case study, Del
Norte County, and the methods used to conduct this research in section 1.3. I present the results of this study in section 1.4, with the first portion dedicated to examining place meanings by participant and the second by theme. I conclude in section 1.5 by contextualizing this study’s findings in the broader field of place research, discussing the implications of power as it relates to place, and reviewing photo methods as a tool in place and other areas of research.
1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Place, Sense of Place, and Place Meaning

Since the seminal works of Tuan (1977; 1974) and Relph (1976), the concept of place in research has undergone many revisions, adaptations, and delineations for use in a wide variety of disciplines. Because of its broad applicability to investigate questions of how people relate to, experience, and understand their environment, a plurality of terms and definitions exist within the literature that attempt to describe different aspects of place (Figure 1). In his review of place literature, Stedman sardonically notes that his attempt to identify themes within it is only done “at the risk of…creating the appearance of more coherence in the literature than actually exists” (2003, p. 822). Due to the confounding nature of place terminology, the purpose of this section is twofold: first, to provide an overview of place literature, and second to identify the place terms that are important to this research, define the terms as I will be using them, and differentiate them from similar concepts.

Place emerges from space

According to Tuan, space and place are dialectic and require each other for definition: “what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value” (1977, p. 6). Where space is objective and can be concretely described using metrics like distance and direction, place is subjective, and as Tuan indicates, is constructed through experience and interaction, both with the physical
attributes in a space and with people, communities, and institutions. Tuan sums up place as a center of meaning, or field of care. Relph further articulates this idea, asserting that places are:

“fusions of human and natural order…significant centers of experience…the focusing of experiences and intentions onto particular settings. They are based on directly experienced phenomena of the lived world, full of meanings, with real objects, ongoing activities…and become important sources of individual and communal identity, often profound centers of human existence with deep emotional and psychological ties” (Relph, 1976, p. 141).

In an attempt to parse out the attributes of place-as-meaningful-location, John Agnew outlines three central aspects of place: location, locale, and sense of place (1987). Location is similar in definition to space: it is fixed, bounded, and can be located. Colloquially, place is often used simply to refer to location, rather than the more complex construct of place in the academic literature. Locale describes the “material setting for social relations – the actual shape of place within which people conduct their lives as individuals” (Cresswell, 2015, pp. 13–14). Similar to Tuan, Cresswell utilizes Agnew’s concept of locale to indicate that social interaction plays an important role in individual construction of place. Finally, sense of place captures the relationship of humans to places and the meanings we create and project onto them; it is the “subjective and emotional attachment people have to place” (Cresswell, 2015, p. 14).
Figure 1: Hierarchy of place terms. While not all scholars agree, these definitions are how I conceived of these terms based on the literature. Place meaning is specifically highlighted because it is the focus of this research.¹

Sense of place

Similar to the broader concept of place, sense of place has as many definitions as there are fields of study that have employed it as a theoretical concept (see Farnum et al. 2005 and Lewicka 2011 for thorough reviews). Richard Stedman has done extensive research using sense of place, and has also used photo methods to interrogate how it is experienced in a variety of contexts, and because of this overlap in methodology and frameworks I will largely rely on his definitions going forward. In considering how sense of place can be better integrated with quantitative science and resource management, he culls together an analysis of sense of place literature and considers it through these alternate lenses (Stedman, 2003). In his analysis he offers multiple definitions of sense of place: “the meanings and attachments held by an individual or group for a spatial setting;” “the meaning and importance of a setting held by an individual or group, based on an individual’s and group’s experience with the setting;” and a three-component view emerging from social sciences, including “the physical setting, human activities that occur there, and human social and psychological processes (meanings and attachments) rooted in the setting” (Stedman, 2003, p. 822). For this research, I will use the first definition Stedman presents.

As can be seen in the three definitions above, meaning and attachment are common facets of sense of place, independent of scholars’ disciplinary backgrounds or study contexts. Altman and Low (1992) first used the term place attachment to describe the affective connection that develops between people and place. They note that “affect, emotion, and feeling are central to the concept,” and that these “emotional qualities are
often accompanied by cognition (thought, knowledge, and belief) and practice (action and behavior)” (Altman & Low, 1992, pp. 4–5). However, their analysis does not parse place attachment from other place-related concepts, and their claim that “place attachment subsumes or is subsumed by a variety of analogous ideas, including topophilia (Tuan 1974), place identity (Proshansky et al. 1983), insideness (Rowles 1980), genres of place (Hufford 1992), sense of place or rootedness (Chawla 1992), environmental embeddedness, community sentiment and identity (Hummon 1992)” accents their call for more systemic analysis of these concepts (Altman & Low, 1992, p. 3).

Williams and colleagues (1992) utilized a multidimensional framework to investigate place attachment in wilderness users, in which they describe place dependence and place identity as sub-concepts of place attachment. **Place dependence** refers to the extent to which a particular place compares to other alternatives in satisfying an individual’s goals and needs (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981), while **place identity** describes the way one’s self-defined sense of individuality is shaped or symbolically influenced by the physical environment (Proshansky et al., 1983).

Jorgensen and Stedman took these three place-concepts and analyzed them using an attitude theory framework to explore the utility of considering Sense of Place as a multidimensional construct comprising (1) Identity (beliefs about the relationship between self and place); (2) Attachment (emotional connection to place); and (3) Dependence, or the degree to which the place in relation to alternative places is perceived to underpin behavior (2001, p. 244).
After using a variety of models to examine the relationship of primary constructs (identity, attachment, and dependence) to a broader sense of place, they suggest that attachment was most synonymous with sense of place. Though they offer caveats about the validity of using place constructs to represent domains of attitude, their results reinforce the conceptualization offered by Williams et al. that place attachment subsumes place dependence and identity.

The second component of sense of place, place meaning, has been given much less attention in the academic literature when compared to place attachment. **Place meaning** is often defined as the symbolic associations individuals or groups have with a place, or the cognitive beliefs that reflect the value or significance of a place to that person or group (Davenport & Anderson, 2005; Farnum et al., 2005). Farnum and colleagues (2005) note that place meaning has often been used interchangeably with sense of place, and Stedman (2008) endeavors to separate the two terms by asking the question: “what do we mean by place meanings?” (p. 65). Again using attitude theory, he describes place meaning as based primarily on cognitions and beliefs about place, whereas place attachment is more concerned with affective and evaluative assessment of place. On top of the terms being used interchangeably, fully separating the two concepts is made more challenging due to their reflexive relationship: the construction of meaning may yield attachment to place, and conversely people may become attached to the meanings they hold. Additionally, evaluative statements like “this place is meaningful to me” are frustratingly consistent with attachment, as it indicates a positive emotional bond with a place. However, the types of question asked by a researcher can more clearly
delineate whether they are investigating meaning or attachment. Generally speaking, questions about attachment are concerned with *to what degree* a person values a place, while questions about meaning interrogate *why* that place is valued. Stedman summarizes the questions asked by place meaning research nicely: “Symbolic meanings about place can be translated into cognitions or beliefs: descriptive statements about ‘what kind of place this is’” (2008, p. 66). While this distinction implies using quantitative measurement and analysis for attachment and qualitative for meaning, there is no reason that *all* place meaning studies must use qualitative methodologies (and vice versa).

For this research, I am primarily concerned with place meaning. Not only are the research questions I pose explicitly about place meaning, but my qualitative methods (photo elicitation and semi-structured interviews) are not designed to assess strength of attachment. Rather, they focus on why residents value the place they live, and, as Stedman suggests, what kind of place they envision themselves residing in.

**Social construction of place**

Following from the assertions of Tuan and Relph that place emerges from undifferentiated space through individual and group experience, many scholars have investigated sense of place with the assumption that both the innate qualities of the environment and biological and evolutionary factors play relatively minor roles compared to sociocultural interactions in that place. However, there is no broad consensus on whether this assumption is correct, and there is much debate within the field on the relative strength of these three factors in developing a sense of place.
Much research has been dedicated to understanding how place is socially created, likely owing to the claims by scholars in the 1970s of the importance of experience in shaping place. This experience can come at different scales, most commonly though at the individual and community levels. Some scholars insist that place meanings are fundamentally individualistic, and that there exist as many meanings for a place as there are people who experience it. Using a symbolic interactionism framework, Greider and Garkovich (1994) posit that both the individual and sociocultural interaction are important in place creation. The opening line of their paper, “every river is more than just one river,” echoes Relph’s assertion that places contain multiple symbolic meanings that stem from the individual. However, they go a step further in claiming that even though places may embody multiple meanings, each meaning “is grounded in the cultural definitions of those who encounter that place” (Greider & Garkovich, 1994, p. 2). In a similar vein, Stokowski (2002, p. 372) states:

Thus, even while an individual might develop a personal sense of place around a specific site, the “social place” known and understood across sets of people is created and reproduced through interpersonal interaction, formalized in social behavior, and ultimately persists in collective memory.

She continues that much of what an individual initially understands about a place is mediated by others, and that this interaction is not simply getting one person up to speed, but is an active process of continually creating place.

Beyond social construction, Altman and Low (1992) suggest that there is indeed a biological component to the attachment to place. Since their work, “a host of cross-cultural studies suggest that preferences for types of landscapes may be at least somewhat
innate,” though none of these studies were able to conclusively demonstrate evidence of biological influence (Farnum et al., 2005, p. 7). In particular, recreation and tourism research has tended to not incorporate biologically-based preferences in studies of sense of place.

The discussion around the relative influence of the physical environment and sociocultural interaction on sense of place is much more wide-reaching than that concerning biological factors. Stedman describes how, despite there being a commonly agreed upon three-part definition of sense of place including “the physical environment, human behaviors, and social and/or psychological processes,” research has been conducted almost to the exclusion of the role of the physical environment in formulating a sense of place (2008, p. 671). His central argument is that “although social constructions are important, they hardly arise out of thin air” (Stedman, 2008, p. 671). He questions whether we would ascribe wilderness meanings to heavily urbanized areas in order to highlight that the physical landscape of a place necessarily circumscribes and gives form to the symbols and meanings constructed for that place. A final point of clarity he provides is that he is not suggesting that the physical environment determines human behavior, but rather that it is an important contributor to behavior that has been given short shrift in place literature.

Jeff Malpas takes a somewhat harder line on the social construction of place itself: “Indeed the social does not exist prior to place nor is it given expression except in and through place…It is within the structure of place that the very possibility of the social arises.” (1999, pp. 35–36). Though I am not adopting his perspective, it is important to
acknowledge that scholarly debate is ongoing as to the role of social construction in developing a sense of place, as well as in the foundational assumption in much place research that place itself is a construct.

A prominent example of a socially constructed place, and one that is particularly relevant to this research, is that of wilderness. Though contentious and somewhat contradictory, Roderick Frasier Nash describes wilderness thus:

On the one hand, it is inhospitable, alien, mysterious, and threatening; on the other, beautiful, friendly, and capable of elevating and delighting the beholder. Involved, too, in this second conception is the value of wild country as a sanctuary in which those in need of consolation can find respite from the pressures of civilization (Nash, 2014, p. 4).

Implicit in both pieces of the definition is the absence of humans from wilderness, and Nash continues by questioning the extent of influence civilization can have on a space for it to still be considered wilderness. Perhaps the most prominent definition of wilderness in the United States comes from the Wilderness Act of 1964:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain (Wilderness Act, 1964, p. 891).

Both of these constructions of wilderness rely on Edenic views of non-human nature that have no empirical basis in reality, as many landscapes the world over are shown to have been created by people, and today our human influence extends even into the most remote of places. Furthermore, this framing of wilderness by the state that places nature and culture on two poles of a binary is power-laden, with important implications for people engaging in those spaces.
For the purposes of this research, I will operate on the assumption that both the physical environment and social processes contribute to sense of place, though they will necessarily vary in importance between individuals. As will be discussed in more depth in the following section, I will also place my focus on the individual construction of meaning, rather than the social forces involved in this process.

**Politics and power of place**

There are two scholars whose work focuses on the social construction of place that I want to draw our attention to, as they push our thinking towards the ramifications of defining place and how this can be an exclusionary tactic. Tim Cresswell writes about the construction of place and its “implication in the creation and maintenance of ideological beliefs” (1996, p. 150). He is particularly interested in the ways in which space and place construct a normative world, how this constructs difference, and how transgression can be used to understand the margins of what is ‘normal’ in a place. Cresswell builds on the scholarship of Pierre Bourdieu (1977), who asserts that certain orderings of space tell us who we are in society, and that this has a large influence on how groups represent the world and themselves. Cresswell also suggests that there exists a reflexive relationship between place meaning and discourse:

The media reaction to a perceived transgression (such as homeless people in Grand Central Station), then, is affecting place through its discourse at the same time as this discourse is affected by the already existing meanings of place (the idea that Grand Central Station is not for sleeping in) (1996, p. 9).

Finally, Cresswell asserts the historical and cultural relativity of place meaning and questions why place is such a powerful location of social power.
In her writings on place and power in outdoor recreation, Patricia Stokowski discusses the relationship between socially constructed place, discourse, and power, and offers important commentary on how place is defined and the contested nature of place (2002). A common assumption in outdoor recreation research is that social, cultural, and managerial contexts are stable and predictable. Stokowski challenges this assumption, arguing “places are always in the process of being created, always provisional and uncertain, and always capable of being discursively manipulated towards desired…ends” (2002, p. 374). Stokowski affirms what other scholars have argued, that place is not inherent but emergent from discourse and language, and furthers this by claiming that place making is a power imbued act, that it is a “promotion of a preferred reality,” and that we must question how place creation asserts one group’s normative order over others (2002, p. 374).

While these two scholars make similar arguments concerning place as social power, they differ in their approach to the topic: Stokowski comes at this theme from a discursive angle, while Cresswell is more concerned with ideology and ideological strategies. In examining the political implications of place creation, Stokowski notes that the predominant leisure discourse promotes individualism and escaping ordinary society to the freedom found in ‘real’ nature. However, those seeking escape in nature simply recreate the normative order they expect, resulting not in a singular nature but a plurality of natures discursively constructed through a variety of social processes. This plurality has resulted in what other scholars have termed ‘contested natures,’ where power and
privilege play major roles in how discourse can be used to enforce a certain normative-order-in-nature (Macnaghten, 1998).

Cresswell can further our understanding of ‘contested natures’ through his discussion of differentiation as a key mechanism through which ideology is constructed and expressed. He asserts, “ideologies are set up in opposition to something else,” insinuating that the construction of ideology is an expression of differentiating from the ‘other’ (1996, p. 153). Place is an important area in which ideological difference can be created and asserted (insider/outsider), in which an outsider is not only someone not of that place, but someone who is unfamiliar with the normative rules of that place. For example, hegemonic definitions of wilderness situate nature in opposition to culture, where culture is mutable and subjective and nature is objective and immutable. The ideological and discursive framing of ‘natural spaces’ inherently creates difference, and displays how latent societal power structures can exert their power even in places where society is imagined to have less sway.

National Parks are a particular kind of place often designated at least in part as wilderness, and, as Stokowski suggests, attention must be paid to the ways in which the power-laden label of wilderness enforces one group’s normative order over others. A central tenet of American National Parks is that they are owned by the public, and therefore all people have the right to visit and experience them, and this same logic extends to State Parks. However, looking at parks through a lens of rights is perhaps too narrow a view, as it does not adequately interrogate the material differences in levels of access people experience, nor does it expose the power relations lying beneath the surface
that dictate these levels of access and distribution. In their paper theorizing access, Jesse Ribot and Nancy Peluso define access as “the ability to benefit from things—including material objects, persons, institutions, and symbols.” (2003, p. 153). Further, they disrupt the “bundle of rights” notion of property, and instead suggest that, following from their definition, access is more of a “bundle of powers.” The varied mechanisms through which people derive access to resources are collectively this “bundle of powers,” and by examining this bundle we might better understand the ramifications of differential access despite the face value of equal rights.

In the context of this research, the ultimate authority that allows access to parks in Del Norte is the state, both the state of California and the US. Not only is the state allowed to define access, it is also given the freedom to define the normative space within the Park, and these norms can differentially curtail or enable access. Ribot and Peluso define two of the sticks within the “bundle of powers” as political-economic and cultural. The state can exercise its political-economic powers through a variety of mechanisms and at multiple scales, including charging entrance fees, designating rules for the Park, or creating advertising campaigns that portray the Park in a certain light to the public. Likewise, its cultural power can perhaps most powerfully be exerted through the erasure of indigenous culture and history in that place, one of the central goals of any settler-colonial state and one that is strongly reinforced by the dominant framing of wilderness as unpeopled and untrammeled. Though just one example, wilderness as a social construct and a power-laden designation for a place shows that an examination of power in its various forms is necessary in any study of place.
The discursive framing of places by societal actors is one such example of how power is exercised in a place. In considering the power of discourse, Sarah Ray conducts an analysis of environmentalist disgust in the United States, and unpacks how this discourse pits proper and ‘good’ ecological subjects against “impure, dirty, unnatural ‘ecological others’” (2013, p. 3). Environmentalist discourse constructs ecological others on the basis that their community’s “environmental ethics and practices do not fit mainstream environmentalism’s notion of what it means to be ecologically correct” (2013, p. 5). Furthermore, these ecological others are justifiably excluded from these spaces, and are the ones whose “poor decisions and reckless activities” create a world that must be saved by the ‘good’ ecological subject (Ray, 2013, p. 5). Cresswell’s idea of transgression resonates here, where a powerful way we understand the meaning of wilderness spaces is through what is deemed inappropriate.

Ray also offers two poignant critiques that are relevant to this research: of wilderness as a construct, and of sense of place. In her discussion of the environmentalist beginnings of social Darwinism, she equally implicates eugenics and wilderness preservation as projects of social control and nation-building. Stemming from a history of westward expansion, manifest destiny, and the closing of the frontier, wilderness preservation has saved wild spaces for the ideal Anglo-American man to be produced. Bruce Braun declares wilderness a “purification machine” in this production process (2003, p. 197), and Jake Kosek furthers this idea in his examination of how racial discourses, particularly fears of racial degradation, became intertwined in fears of ‘pristine’ wilderness degradation (Kosek, 2004). Designating a place as wilderness
carries with it these histories of control, exclusion, and purification, and further constrains which groups are considered good and proper in these spaces.

In her critique of sense of place, Ray references Ursula Heise, who argues that many environmentalist perspectives have sense of place as a prerequisite for any activism or awareness. Having this prerequisite creates a hierarchy of senses of place, which can be the basis for excluding ecological others as long as “place continues to function as one of the most important categories through which American environmentalists articulate what it means to be ecologically aware and ethically responsible” (Heise, 2008, p. 29). Other scholars from multiple disciplines have critiqued sense of place as a masculine desire for a lost sense of belonging, a nostalgia for ‘the country,’ and its potential to lead to “isolationism, [not-in-my-backyard]-ism, environmental determinism, essentialism, and xenophobia” (Ray, 2013, p. 26).

Parks and other protected areas in the United States whose existence is predicated on wilderness conservation can be similarly critiqued as reinforcing exclusion of ecological others based on a sense of place, particularly in light of wilderness preservation being implicated in nationalist processes of social control. These critiques leveled at both places designated as wilderness and sense of place as a construct are valid and necessary, and suggest a closer look at the spaces in which people and communities interact with wilderness most often: protected areas.
People and Protected Areas

Protected areas are widely considered critical to the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity (Cumming, 2016). In recent decades PA management has undergone a paradigm shift, moving away from a “fences-and-fines” (Mathevet et al., 2016) or “park-as-island” (Lee et al., 2018) approach that manages and excludes local communities, and towards a more inclusive approach that considers and integrates community viewpoints and opinions into the decision-making process. This shift is an important one, as many PA-community relationships have been and continue to be contentious due to factors including the displacement of local people and practices and disproportionate costs and benefits for locals (Durrant & Shumway, 2004; Mutanga et al., 2015, 2017). This increasing acceptance of communities into the decision-making process can also disrupt the framing of these places as wilderness and begin to erode the nature-culture divide, in the sense that this process recognizes the importance of people to the natural world around them.

While this paradigm shift has led to novel approaches to study PA-community relationships, there has historically been a common way to frame these studies. In a recent study examining diverging community perspectives on a nearby PA, Lee and colleagues suggest that “academic work in this area has focused on the economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts that parks have on adjacent communities” (2018, p. 1). Other scholars have identified that the literature has often failed to treat communities as diverse collections of people, and “tend to fix communities and peoples in time and
Allendorf (2010) seeks to correct for this homogenization of communities by insisting on the individual as a unit of analysis, but this may diminish or ignore the importance of community interaction and the social construction of attitudes toward PAs. Additionally, studies have placed emphasis on understanding the values of traditional users of PAs, often ignoring “underserved populations or cultural values or practices” (Mangun et al., 2009, p. 296).

These PA research trends also extend to studies that incorporate place into their examination of PA-community relationships. In her analysis of place and power, Stokowski identifies five common characteristics of research about place in outdoor recreation (2002). They include a focus on eliciting only positive values associated with place; physical space is defined by its objective and resource-based qualities; social, cultural, and managerial contexts are considered stable and predictable; and the individual is often the unit of analysis. Many of these characteristics draw from positivistic research philosophies, and may overlook much of the nuance that exists in personal and communal construction of place. For instance, negative values of place should be considered equally important as positive values to understand its complex construction. Also, defining place by objective qualities necessarily challenges a sense of place that is based upon subjective qualities of place, and assuming the contexts of a place are immutable and constant reifies the current dominant construction of that place. Furthermore, as scholars like Cantrill and Stedman have noted, subjective qualities of place (i.e. those arising out of personal experience) are important factors in the formation
of a sense of place, and have ramifications for the success of management plans that involve local communities.

All of these precepts relate to the idea of a ‘mythic community,’ first presented by Agrawal and Gibson (1999). They address the preconception of community-based conservation literature with imagining communities as “small, integrated groups using locally evolved norms to manage resources sustainably and equitably,” and suggest instead that research dial into the divergent interests of community members, the ways in which these interests arise and interact, and the institutions that can influence the outcomes of these interactions (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999, p. 640).

Given these conclusions about studying communities, there exists a potential contradiction: that both scales of study, the community and the individual, can be reductive. Studies at the scale of the individual might miss out on the social construction and interaction that takes place at the community level, a concept which is given much credence in the study of place. Conversely, community-scale studies are at risk of suggesting more homogeneity than truly exists, and can also gloss over personal experience as it contributes to place making. It is perhaps not necessary to resolve this contradiction, but acknowledgement of how the scale of study might impact any research findings is critical.

On the PA side of this relationship, residents of nearby communities most notably interact with PAs while physically in that space. While there, their interactions are often constrained by the rules and regulations the PA has put into place. Like every space we enter into, parks and PAs have norms people are expected to follow, and these norms are
designed and enforced by the people and institutions in power. As Agrawal and Gibson (1999) suggest, viewing communities for the multiplicities they are is critical to effectively unpack the ways in which norms and their enforcement differentially impact people in communities surrounding PAs.

Given this understanding of PAs as a normative space, acknowledging the subjectivities people bring with them into that space can shed light on how they might interact with the norms there. In a study situated in the Michigan, Cantrill (1998) sought to understand local residents’ sense of place, particularly meaning of place, and how to better structure informational campaigns about large-scale ecosystem management around those place meanings. What they found was that place meanings were not at all uniform within even a compact community, and they concluded that “the ‘felt’ perceptions of the forest are as real and as important as ‘scientific facts.’ Both should be incorporated into land management planning.” (Cantrill, 1998, p. 314). These findings reify not only the existence of a shift towards incorporating community values into land management, but the significance of these subjectivities and their material impact on management outcomes.

Stedman also offers commentary on incorporating place research into outdoor recreation and natural resource contexts, particularly the importance of place meanings. In an analysis of place meaning in the literature, he argues that meaning may be more important than attachment to PA management because it may help managers understand other phenomena that might be of greater interest, such as conflict over land use. Such conflict often entails conflict over meanings rather than attachment (acrimonious conflict rarely occurs
between groups with differing strengths of place attachment) (2008, p. 62).

Stedman continues that structural factors under the control of PA managers can influence place meanings, including both the physical environment and the land management strategies in that place. Other scholars have come to similar conclusions about the importance of place meanings to natural resource managers. Cheng and colleagues (2003, p. 87) remark that “natural resource politics is as much a contest over place meanings as it is a competition among interest groups over scarce resources,” and Davenport and Anderson (2005, p. 639) declare that the most important conclusion of their research for those with jurisdiction over place is that “contentious issues like development can be better understood by identifying and examining place meanings.”

Considering this research project in light of these other scholars’ works, it is important to identify where I align or diverge from these different frameworks. The importance of place meanings to identifying conflict over place is an important reason for why I am focusing on meaning. This research originally arose out of community comments about perceived disconnect between the Del Norte community and Jed Smith, and place meaning is clearly an effective tool to interrogate this disconnect. In this examination of community, it is my goal to push back against the treatment of the Del Norte community as homogenous. Although I certainly will not capture all or maybe even most of the expected diversity of place meanings in the Del Norte community, this research should demonstrate that even within certain groups, like recreationists, diversity of sentiment and experience exists.
In my examination of place meaning, I will be focusing on the scale of individual, rather than community, construction of meaning, and I chose this for two interrelated reasons. First, using the individual as the unit of analysis better supports the research goal of pushing back against homogenization of communities. While interaction and social construction are undoubtedly important to the generation of place meanings, the ability to analyze this aspect of meaning construction is limited by my methodology. Second, and following from this limitation, my methodology does not offer any opportunity for group discussion, nor does it specifically interrogate inter- and intra-group construction of place, so any conclusions I draw on community construction of place meanings would be based on extrapolation rather than any empirical data. Given these theoretical frameworks, photo elicitation is a method well placed to unearth the subjectivities of individual place meaning and allow participants to tell their own stories in the process.
1.3 METHODS

Case Study

This research is a case study of Del Norte County, California, a place with significant natural resources, including multiple protected areas. One such protected area, Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, is situated just east of Crescent City on 16.3 mi² of land (Figure 2). The Park itself is on unceded Tolowa Dee-ni’ territory, and the greater region is home to two other Native American tribes: the Yurok and the Tolowa nations. Since Euro-American colonization, land seizure, and the county’s establishment in 1857, Del Norte County largely relied on its productive timber and fishing industries. Jed Smith was first established in 1929 for the express purpose of preserving intact old growth redwood ecosystems, and was later incorporated into the Redwood National and State Park (RNSP, the Parks) System in 1968. The Park started with only one small grove donated to Save the Redwoods League by a local lumber worker, and now contains roughly seven percent of all remaining old growth redwood forest in the world (Jedediah Smith Redwoods SP, 2019).

Del Norte County had a 2017 population of 24,552, 63.1% of which identified as white alone, 19.3% as Hispanic or Latinx, and 6.0% as American Indian alone (Owens et al., 2018). The vast majority of the county’s population lives in Crescent City and the towns north of it, with much smaller proportions living inland in Gasquet or Klamath in
Figure 2: Map of coastal Del Norte County, from south of Klamath to north of Crescent City, inland to east of Gasquet. Courtesy of Redwood National and State Parks.
southern Del Norte. The poverty rate in Del Norte is 23.7%, considerably higher than the state of California at 14.4%. The most common forms of employment in Del Norte by sector include government (36.4%), retail (10.8%), and travel and recreation (9.0% in 2012), while agriculture, including timber and forestry, accounts for 2.8%.

Del Norte, similar to many rural counties of the western United States, experienced a decline in employment and revenue from timber and fishing industries in the late 20th and early 21st centuries; at the same time there was a significant rise in service industries, including tourism. An issue of concern for many participants in this study was how Crescent City and Del Norte County will be able to adapt to this change in economic structure, and whether people and institutions are ready for an inflection point that many described as quickly approaching.

Preliminary Study

This research emerged from a recent study conducted by myself and Thea Doyon, which investigated issues of changing visitation and impacts in Jed Smith due to the popularization of Grove of Titans (Arndt et al., 2019). In this study, community members repeatedly identified communication coming from the Park concerning impacts, proposed changes to the Park, and management decisions as an issue that needed to be addressed in order to improve their mutual relationship. The communication gap described by community members was the space into which this research initially ventured, and after many iterations I settled on using place meanings as a mechanism to shed light on potential reasons for this gap. The Grove of Titans research allowed me to establish
contacts in the Del Norte community, outline initial research questions for this project, and map out potential theoretical frameworks within which to conduct the research.

Participant Recruitment

Participant recruitment took place during the summer and fall of 2019, and was approved by the Institutional Review Board (#18-210) on June 3, 2019. The most important characteristic of participants was having an established connection to Jed Smith, be it positive, negative, or neutral. I set a goal of recruiting 15 participants and used purposive recruitment to select a diversity of people from the Del Norte community in an attempt to reflect the hypothesized local variations in place meaning.

The primary method I used for recruitment was snowball sampling based on contacts from the Grove of Titans research project, though I also used cold contacting to recruit individuals who I believed might have a perspective that was un- or under-represented. Ultimately, ten current and former residents of Del Norte County agreed to participate: two were contacts from a previous research project, seven were recruited through snowball sampling, and one was recruited from cold contact. Due to the diverse method of participant recruitment, an accurate overall response rate cannot be calculated. However, snowball sampling yielded 9/24 yes, 6/24 no, 8/24 no response, and 1/24 yes but no response to follow up. Of the people that were interested, 10/11 advanced to the photography phase, and 10/10 photographers completed an interview.
Table 1: Participant demographics, including occupation, length of residence in Del Norte County, and whether they still live in Del Norte County. Some participants described multiple occupations, meaning Current or Former Occupation totals more than 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current or former occupation</th>
<th>#</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Park Service</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education-Counseling</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation Non-Profit</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Non-Profit</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Employed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/County/State</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Recreation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-30 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31+ years</td>
<td>4</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Still live in DNC</th>
<th>#</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
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Photo Methods

Review of literature

Photo elicitation is a method that allows research participants to take photographs to document their observations and experiences, and then to subsequently discuss their photographs in an interview. This method was first described and used in an anthropological study conducted by John Collier in 1957 examining mental health and housing quality in Canadian Maritime Provinces. He and a multi-disciplinary team at
Cornell University conducted interviews both with and without photos, and in comparing these interviews, Collier noted that photo-interviews were often longer, more in-depth, and tended to reduce misunderstandings. Additionally, he described how photos can serve a variety of important purposes, including acting as a language bridge between the interviewer and participant and as a stimulus for latent memories. Since this research project, photo-interviewing has been built upon and used in a wide variety of academic pursuits.

In his review and history of photo elicitation methods, Douglas Harper describes how Collier’s photo-interview has developed into photo elicitation, and the three primary uses of photos in this approach: first, as a “visual inventory of objects, people, and artifacts;” second, as a depiction of “events that were part of collective or institutional pasts;” and third, to “portray the intimate dimensions of the social” (2002, p. 13). Further, he asserts that this method is not only more effective than just interviews at probing deeper into topics, but may also produce different kinds of information. The use of photos in interviews requires the interviewee to process images in addition to words, and Harper posits that this “mines deeper shafts into a different part of human consciousness than do words-alone interviews” (2002, pp. 22–23).

In an ethnographic study of elementary school children’s experience living and growing up in Los Angeles, Marisol Clark-Ibáñez described her use of photo elicitation and how it “helped capture the tangible and intangible aspects of children’s lives” (2004, p. 1509). Similar to Harper, she found that the scope of data gathered through photo elicitation interviews (PEI) were different than the typical words-alone interview. Photos,
particularly those taken by the participants, have the potential to prompt meaning that may not have otherwise emerged, or bring to the surface meaning(s) that are invisible to the interviewer. For example, she described an interview in which Melissa took a picture of her favorite tree across the street from her home. After a few probing questions, Melissa described how she couldn’t go see the tree because she and her family were undocumented. In this case, the tree was not just a tree, but was also “a symbol of Melissa’s immigration status that restricted her movement” (2004, p. 1514).

In addition to the utility of photo-interviews described by Collier and Clark-Ibáñez, photos may also allow researchers to perceive the world from a more complex viewpoint, disrupt the inherent power structures of an interview, provide structure, act as a memory anchor, and act as a communication bridge. Kristen Cook uses a method similar to photo elicitation, photovoice, and describes how by “investigating how participants make meaning of their own experiences,” the power of defining the research is shifted away from those who hold the dominant view and “into the hands of the photographer” (Cook, 2015, p. 588).

Despite the importance of photos in the interview process, verbal data gathered in the interview are often given greater weight than the visual data contained in the photographs; “in other words, pictures are a means to an end, rather than an end unto themselves” (Briggs et al., 2014, p. 158). The priority given to verbal data in photo elicitation distinguishes it from similar methods such as photovoice. Wang and Burris (1997) were the first to outline photovoice as a method distinct from photo elicitation, and described it within a participatory action research framework as a method to “convey
messages about important issues to policy makers” and build the capacity for social action within a community (Briggs et al., 2014, p. 158). In addition to placing a greater emphasis on visual data, photovoice is a more group-oriented approach, whereas photo elicitation involves one-on-one interaction between the researcher and participants. I chose to use photo elicitation for this research primarily because my research questions were more concerned with individual, rather than community, construction of place meaning.

In the last two decades, photo methodologies have begun to be used by researchers investigating sense of place. In one of the first studies of this kind examining place attachment using photo methods, Stedman and others (2004) note that sense of place is a complex, multifaceted concept, and that photo methods are well placed to offer researchers a better understanding of it. For their research, they borrow a popular leisure research photo method, visitor employed photography, and modify it to be used by residents of both parks and working forest communities in Alberta, Canada. They note that this method offers significant advantages for studying sense of place: “it is capable of conveying multilayered meanings, …photographs can serve as a reference point and a focus of the interviews, … [and] photographs are “placed” in ways not easily captured in survey research” (Stedman et al., 2004, p. 586). Rather tongue in cheek, they note that to study place, it is logical to actually learn about the specific places people are attached to.

In a separate paper on the same study, Beckley and others (2007) again assert the value and efficacy of using resident employed photography (REP) to understand sense of place. Given that attitudes toward place are often subconscious, simply asking a person
directly about their attachments to place may not yield the depth or breadth of information necessary to understand the basis of their attachments. REP, however, allows participants to “deeply reflect on their attachments to place and the meanings involved in those attachments” (Beckley et al., 2007, p. 918). The photo method portion of this research project is adapted from Beckley et al. and Stedman et al., and I will refer to my method hereafter as photo elicitation.

**Photo methodology**

Ten current and former residents of Del Norte County were provided with a 27-exposure single-use camera and asked to take pictures of the things that “‘most attach’ them to their community, that ‘mean the most’ to them, or that they would ‘miss most if they were to move away’” (Stedman et al., 2004, p. 588; See Appendix A for complete photography guide). Though some studies have explicitly interrogated positive and negative emotional bases for place meaning (Manzo, 2005), many, including the two studies these methods draw from, focus almost exclusively on positive place meaning and attachment. I chose to depart from this paradigm and encouraged participants to also take pictures of the things that most detach them from their community, that they feel most negatively impact the meanings they hold, and that might compel them to consider moving away. This acknowledgement of both positive and negative place meanings proved crucial to understanding the true multifaceted nature of these residents’ sense of place.

In taking pictures, participants were encouraged to “be creative (taking a picture of a grave site to represent history, or a church to represent the congregation), and not to
feel restricted by circumstances such as time of year or accessibility issues (taking a photograph of the shed where the snowmobiles were kept to represent winter activities)” (Beckley et al., 2007, p. 919). Additionally, participants were allowed to substitute pictures of their own for hard-to-access or no-longer-in-existence places, though no one chose to take advantage of this option (two participants showed me photos of their own after the conclusion of our interview). I was cautious not to provide too many examples like those given in Beckley et al. so that participants did not feel constrained or directed to certain places or subjects. Participants were encouraged to consider making a list of places/photos/activities they wanted to document prior to taking any pictures. This was to provide them structure so they might avoid taking too many pictures of similar things or unimportant photos in a rush to finish off the roll of film. Finally, participants were asked to take either a picture of themselves or of their name written down for use in identifying their roll of photos after development. This photo was not used beyond identification, leaving 26 substantive photos per participant.

After receiving their camera and instructions, participants were given two weeks to complete the picture taking process, after which they dropped their cameras off at the Newton B. Drury Center, a relatively central location in Crescent City. I picked up the cameras on a regular basis, and developed participants’ pictures using mail-in film processing facilities. Each participant received a hard copy of the photos they took, and I retained a digital copy of the photos for use in analysis and in the final write up. One participant lost their film camera and retook his photos with his phone, which he shared with me digitally.
Interviews

After the developed photos were returned to me by mail, I contacted participants to schedule an interview, which ranged from 68 to 98 minutes in length. Each participant was given the option of choosing the location of their interview, and all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The format for interviews was semi-structured. I developed an interview guide based on Beckley et al. (2007) with four broad sections, and specific questions in each section to guide the discussion, though the interview could deviate based on the individual participant’s interests, background, expertise, and/or experience (See Appendix B for Interview Guide). The interview sections included background and demographics, participant photos, Jed Smith, and delivery of findings.

Each interview began with a more structured discussion of the participant’s background and history in Del Norte, their activities, occupation, and anything else they found important to share about themselves. Following this, participants were given their set of photos to look at for the first time, and were asked to select 5-10 that they most wanted to discuss. After selecting their set, participants were encouraged to organize their pictures in whatever order they wanted on a grid numbered 1-10. In all but two interviews, I wrote the numbers on masking tape and organized them in a two-by-five or three-by-three-plus-one grid, depending on the available table space. These numbers were used to identify individual pictures during the interview, and I took a picture of the layout for reference during interview analysis.
Two participants did not follow this exact methodology for picture organization. The first lost his disposable camera and retook his pictures with his phone. He shared his photos with me via Google Drive, and we used the digital copies in our interview. The second had a tablecloth that I didn’t want to put tape on, and instead I wrote the numbers on scraps of paper, which she then placed on photos that were organized in clusters rather than in a grid.

After organizing their photos, I asked for a brief explanation of why they chose those specific photos and why they organized them in the way they did, and we then spent the remainder of this section in a more open format using the photos as a basis for our discussion. Topics I asked or probed about included what they were trying to capture, what in/about the photo is meaningful or valuable, why they took the picture, and how the photo captures their relationship to that place. This section typically accounted for roughly half of the interview time.

After finishing our discussion of their photos, I transitioned the interview to focus on questions concerning Jed Smith. We began by examining all 26 of their photos to see how many they took within the Park, and I asked them to comment on why they thought they took the proportion of photos in Jed Smith that they did. This section was more structured than the previous, and I asked specific questions about what they valued about Jed Smith, their relationship with the Park, and whether they consider Jed Smith part of the community. I did not define community for participants, and because only some opted to define community unprompted, I suggest further researchers in this vein ask participants explicitly to define what community means to them.
In the final interview section, I was concerned with eliciting participants’ opinions on how best to communicate the research findings, both to participants themselves and to various community stakeholders. Questions in this section included how to communicate findings, to whom they should be communicated, and what each participant would hope to share with others in the Del Norte community.

Coding and Analysis

Each interview recording was manually transcribed verbatim, yielding 159 pages of interview text. Additionally, participants took a total of 260 photos, 93 of which were chosen for discussion during the interviews.

After transcription, interviews were coded in two successive rounds, starting with descriptive codes to identify important trends in the data, and followed by analytic codes to highlight themes from the descriptive codes (Cope, 2010). Two interviews were coded by fellow graduate students in addition to myself, and we discussed our collective codes as a form of verification. After descriptive coding, I wrote summaries of each interview. Each summary included that participant’s background, the major themes from our discussion of their photos, and their perspectives on Jed Smith, particularly how the coding trends carried over to the discussion of the Park. Once complete, I provided participants with a copy of their interview summary for feedback on my portrayal of them as a person, their comments on their photos and Jed Smith, and whether they felt I left out anything important from the interview.
To assist with the process of refining descriptive codes into analytic codes, I summarized and identified themes from codes developed by other researchers for similar studies on sense of place, place attachment, or place meaning (Beckley et al., 2007; Bricker & Kerstetter, 2002; Davenport & Anderson, 2005; Wynveen et al., 2012). Using these code families identified from outside research, I refined the descriptive codes and developed a robust codebook. The initial codebook contained five code families: Environment-Landscape, Human-Social, History-Future, Recreation-Exploration, and Protected Areas. Through further analysis of the data, some families became obsolete or shifted focus, and the final three code families became Environment-Landscape, Human-Social, and Recreation-Exploration.
1.4 RESULTS

The results are presented in two distinct sections. The first contains summaries for each participant, describing who they are and the major themes from their pictures and interview. The remainder of the results are organized by theme, and the three primary themes of Environment-Landscape (EL), Recreation-Exploration (RE), and Human-Social (HS) are all subdivided into secondary themes (Table 2).

Participant Summaries

Kathleen

Kathleen was born and raised in Del Norte County, moved away multiple times for education and career opportunities, and ended up settling back in Del Norte to raise her daughter near her extended family that also lives here. She has spent the bulk of her career in business, both in Del Norte and other places in the Western US, and in that time has been self-employed, in leadership positions in community business organizations, and on the boards of local non-profits.

Kathleen identified recreation, health, family, and the uniqueness of Del Norte as the most important aspects of this place. She is an avid kayaker and mountain biker, and takes advantage of the multi-sport recreation opportunities abundant in Del Norte. Opportunities for recreation and canning locally sourced food, the interpersonal relationships formed in rural communities, and the cleanliness of the Smith River, air, and beaches were all examples of health she identified. Family was important in a variet
Table 2: The upper tables (unshaded) describe the number of times a particular code was used for each participant. The lower tables (shaded) describe these same numbers as a proportion of that participant’s total codes. The shading on the lower tables was done per participant, with white representing their individually least mentioned theme(s) and black representing their most frequently mentioned theme(s). The two letters preceding each code indicate which code family it belongs to: Environment-Landscape (EL), Recreation-Exploration (RE), or Human-Social (HS).

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of ways, including as a source of support while raising her daughter, the quality time she is able to spend with her daughter, and the opportunity to visit significant places cherished by family no longer alive. Finally, Kathleen stressed how unique this place is, talking about the Smith River and its three forks, Del Norte as an outdoor recreation mecca, and the abundance of special places and species that exist here.

The idea of uniqueness carried over to Jed Smith as well, particularly for people first arriving in Del Norte: “Imagine seeing a redwood tree for the first time. And Jed is definitely the area that that starts happening.” She also stressed that Jed Smith is at the core of the Crescent City and Del Norte community, and that effectively adapting to the shift away from enterprises like fishing and logging as major economic drivers is the next big challenge the community faces. The Parks, including Jed Smith, are now an economic driver for the area through their tourist draw, and creating a community sense of pride for them will be critical. Kathleen recommended more engagement by the Park in the community and creating noticeable signage at Park entrances to declare we are “proud that this is the heart of Redwood National and State Park.”

Sasha

Sasha is in her late 40s and has lived in Del Norte County for almost 30 years. She has two adult children who were born and raised here. Sasha works in the local elementary schools in Crescent City, and is heavily involved in a variety of community organizations, including those that focus on community wellbeing, working with local tribes, and organizing around political issues. Although some of these organizations can be polarizing, she stressed that she works hard to make connections with those that
disagree with her and identified that if people “share a certain set of values, we can fix problems.”

Sasha framed the discussion of her photos by identifying how people, institutions, and more-than-human-beings used that space. A few of the ways she identified use of space included competing or incompatible uses, activities that disrupt her or others’ sense of being in a place, and the sometimes-ill-defined boundaries around spaces and the uncertainty that creates regarding appropriate use. Perhaps because of her extensive involvement within the community, community involvement and belonging was important to her as well. For example, she stressed the importance of community input on projects, and discussed her passion and excitement for an upcoming community project at Beachfront Park. Lastly, Sasha identified change as an inexorable force within Del Norte and her concern that the community is not as ready as it could be when it comes time to face these changes.

Jed Smith is a complex place for Sasha. She touted how welcoming it is to visitors regardless of identity, particularly in comparison to some county and city parks. In addition, she voiced her appreciation of Jed Smith for hosting Tolowa dance demonstrations, and for providing other opportunities to learn and engage within the Park. Like other contributors, she identified the need for increased signage and visibility of the Park to make it more connected to the community and as welcoming to people as possible. Although she viewed the Park in a largely positive light, she did question the equity with which people can access the Park, particularly in the summer swimming season when folks that can’t afford the day use fee may opt to use less-safe stretches of
the Smith to recreate with their young children. Finally, she expressed the importance of events that provide the local community with an opportunity and reason to engage with the Park.

**Travis**

Travis has lived in Del Norte and Curry Counties since 1994, was briefly in Del Norte as a Park employee in the early 1980s, and currently lives in southern Oregon with his wife. He retired after a long career in State Parks in the mid 2000s, and has since been involved with a variety of stewardship and conservation organizations in the area, ranging from member to director. He now spends much of his time fishing, in the outdoors with his wife and dog, and fighting climate change.

The three major themes from Travis’s pictures were local history, stewardship, and connecting with the natural world. Aspects of local history he identified included the Tolowa Nation and colonization, industries including logging, fishing, and mining, the military presence at Camp Lincoln, and the Crescent City community. Although he spent his career in the Parks, Travis has a largely positive view of logging, though he was critical of some practices he thought were contrary to overall goals of stewardship. Finally, Travis highlighted how the Smith River and particular places within the Redwood Parks have a spirituality and reverence for him.

More so than other contributors, Jed Smith was a topic throughout our conversation, which reflects the importance of the Park to Travis’s sense of place in Del Norte. He identified Stout Grove as “the heart of Jed Smith,” and how important it is that visitors experience it. However, he did express concern that as visitation has increased
over the years, people might be “loving the Parks to death” and thus diminishing the experience of being in places like Stout Grove. Furthermore, he identified the Park’s connection to the local community as something to be improved, noting the attachment the community had to past events held in the Park.

Susan

Susan was born and raised in Del Norte, moved away during her 20s to attend Humboldt State University and for other pursuits, and currently splits her time between her homes in Humboldt and Del Norte. As a Xus (Tolowa) elder, she says that Del Norte will always be home for her, though because of the extensive time she’s spent in Humboldt, she feels she knows it well enough to call it a second home. During her career, Susan worked for almost 40 years for health organizations. Since retiring, she has joined and sits on the boards of multiple other community organizations, and is a professional storyteller.

The most important aspects of place for Susan have to do with relating to other people. Throughout our discussion she identified the importance of community, of sharing and passing on knowledge, and the natural beauty of the area as central to her perception of place. Because of her career in public health, Susan noted the importance of engaging and supporting the communities she and others are a part of. She also recalled how she grew up in a family that was supported by her community. Finally, she described how community can be built through everyday interactions at community gathering places, and she recollected many of these memories throughout the interview. Sharing and passing on knowledge was also very important to Susan, and is done not only within
the communities she already is a part of, but with people who may be visiting the area as well. As an elder, she described the importance of passing on cultural knowledge through storytelling and ceremonies like dancing. She also described how she enjoys being a tour guide for newcomers and visitors to the area, and appreciates sharing the natural beauty of the place she loves with others.

Susan considers Jed Smith part of the Del Norte community, and noted that “they’ve protected a lot of our natural life here, and I thoroughly enjoy and I appreciate the fact that that’s happened.” Additionally, she has been involved with bringing Tolowa dances back within Jed Smith, and again described the importance of sharing stories and culture within the Park. One thing that concerned her about Jed Smith and other protected areas is the level of access people are provided, particularly access for subsistence activities such as gathering, fishing, and hunting. Finally, a thread throughout our discussion of Susan’s photos was the importance of peoples’ shared responsibility to public places and the people around us, and how this responsibility might look different for different people.

Arthur

Arthur has lived in Del Norte County for 35 years, and is a retired Park employee who began his career in parks in the early 1980s as a seasonal worker in the Jed Smith campground. He described himself as someone who loves “off-road exploration,” whether that’s on his own two feet hiking and backpacking, on an off-road vehicle, or in a kayak. Since his retirement he has spent his time catching up on things at home and enjoying the wide-open spaces that surround it.
There were three interrelated themes that emerged from our interview: Family, education, and seclusion. Arthur and his family live inland from Crescent City, and he described how the drive to and from school each day with his wife and two children “led to phenomenal family time and bonding with the things we cared about.” This time in the car included exchanging and sharing experiences with each other, and this sharing of experience also came up during discussions about his work in State Parks. Arthur indicated that education was also an important part of his life. For example, he described educating new Park staff about the importance of the Parks, and of the National and State Park partnership he participated in creating.

Perhaps because of his long career in parks, Jed Smith was a topic throughout our discussion. Arthur described the Park as “an integral part of my community, both my personal community and the community of Del Norte County and Humboldt County.” He also noted a difference in Park-community relations between the National and State Parks, saying that since State Parks have been around since the early 1900s they were already quite integrated with the community before the political conflict arose in the 80s and 90s, shortly after the establishment of the National Park. One of his closing thoughts in the interview was the amazing potential the Parks and community have for ecotourism in the future, and that they both need to be ready for the many changes that this will bring.

Roger

Roger has spent nearly his entire life in Del Norte County. He was born and raised in Klamath, spent some time after high school in southern California, but said he was
pulled back to Del Norte after less than a decade by the natural environment, the calmness of the area, and the community he already knew from growing up here. He highlighted throughout the interview how his family history has impacted his life, as his father’s family are Western European immigrants and his mother’s family are Native. He is retired now after a career working in both the timber industry and for the county Sheriff’s Department, and is still involved in multiple community organizations.

In addition to the theme of family and his history in Del Norte, Roger spoke in depth about the multiplicity and diversity of landscapes and places in Del Norte County. He commented that many people who don’t live here picture Del Norte as having a rugged coastline, tall redwoods in the Parks, and Pelican Bay Prison, but that this is only a small part of this place. Additionally, balance and pragmatism were common ideas throughout our discussion. With regards to the balance that exists between conservation and logging, he said, “I guess my views were framed with the fact that that's what put clothes on my back. And when I was a kid, that's what fed me. That's what got me back and forth to school, was my father working in that environment.”

Since he grew up in Del Norte, Roger’s relationship with Jed Smith is long-standing and complex, and contains elements of fond childhood memories and an appreciation for the protected redwoods. He commented multiple times about his appreciation for the fact that those trees and others in protected areas were preserved when they were, and how remarkable it is that they were preserved in such close proximity to areas of intensive logging and to Crescent City itself. While growing up, he recalled how every summer, his extended family would spend two weeks camping in Jed
Smith, and how this was important in building an appreciation for the Park at a young age. Nowadays, he described Jed Smith as an important tourist draw for the county, including the section of the Smith River that runs through the Park, and the importance of the area adapting to the increasing tourism in order to effectively capitalize on this growing part of the economy.

Jonathan

Jonathan has lived in Del Norte County for less than a decade, and still considers himself a newcomer to the area. When he first arrived, he worked as an environmental reporter, and now works as an ecotourism outfitter. He has a passion for exploring and learning about the outdoors, both in the Southwest US where his partner is from and in all the diverse places around Del Norte.

Two important themes emerged from our discussion: the importance of a shared responsibility for public spaces and the unique places in Del Norte. Jonathan discussed his frustration with people not taking adequate care of public spaces, perhaps because of a lack of knowledge or education about this responsibility, and showed this through pictures of trash on trails and areas of dirt road that have been torn up by off-road vehicle use. Through his work as an ecotourism outfitter, he described his love of sharing with visitors the places, species, and landforms that make Del Norte special, including the many endemic species of plants, the Smith River, and of course, the redwoods. Beyond his work, he stressed the uniqueness of being surround by some of “the highest concentration of roadless areas in the lower 48,” and how this sense of seclusion might have led to an increased desire for local control of local spaces. He said this can be seen
in the stronger community relationship to State, rather than National, Parks, and the push for local independence in the form of “Jefferson State,” a hypothetical state of rural counties from southern Oregon and northern California that some within the region have proposed in response to perceived neglect from their respective state governments.

With regard to Jed Smith, Jonathan discussed throughout our interview his frustrations with the bureaucracy of the Park, particularly the partnership between State and National Parks, and how the northern units in the Parks system including Jed Smith seem to be a lower priority than parks farther south. The desire for local control also resonated in the topic of Jed Smith, and he described how the creation of the National Park was fraught with community-Park tensions, particularly when the National Park began to claim jurisdiction over formerly locally controlled places like Crescent Beach Overlook. Beyond his frustrations with park bureaucracy, Jonathan stressed both the positive and negative unique aspects of Jed Smith. He described how “a lot of national parks are places you really have to go to. Redwood National Park is a place that you'd drive through.” Though some parks within the RNSP system may be more of a destination than others, Jonathan questioned if the stopover nature of Jed Smith was due to the close proximity of development to the Park, particularly when compared to other Redwood State Parks. Lastly, he remarked that his critical eye for the Parks likely comes from his background in journalism, but that his appreciation for the Parks and their mission is not diminished because of it, and that he wants to “continue to be aware and try to push forward the mission that everybody wants to have for these places.”
Catherine

Catherine has lived in Del Norte County for less than a decade, but indicated she has already developed meaningful connections to people and organizations in the community. She works with a conservation non-profit, and has “met a lot of new community members and bonded with the community over” food related projects and visiting and working with local farmers at the weekly farmer’s market. She values the diversity of landscapes that exist in Del Norte, particularly the ocean and beaches, high mountains, and old-growth redwood forests, and she and her husband share a passion for exploring these places on hiking trails.

In addition to exploration and recreation, stewardship and the uniqueness of Del Norte were major themes during our conversation. Catherine described how she has an emotional or spiritual connection to many of the places that she explores, and that her goal is not to “climb to the highest peak wherever I go, or see that tallest tree,” but rather to just experience and enjoy each place she’s in. With her work at a conservation non-profit as well as in her personal life, stewardship is important to Catherine. For example, she and her husband have worked hard to restore the soil on their property through permaculture practices, and have since shared what they’ve learned with community members through various food projects. Finally, the uniqueness of Del Norte is something that keeps Catherine here, and is something quite different than what she experienced growing up on the East Coast.

With regards to Jed Smith, the themes of uniqueness and stewardship carried over. As an avid hiker and explorer of the backcountry, Catherine commented that Jed
Smith is unique in that it has large areas that are inaccessible because there are no trails, and how this is an important way to protect some of these old-growth areas. Additionally, she described the Redwoods Rising project, a collaborative effort between California State Parks, National Parks, and Save the Redwoods League to restore and reconnect thousands of acres of previously logged redwood forest, as unique in US parks. What is particularly unique is that the Parks “purchased a piece of land that was not pristine” and are now endeavoring to restore it, which goes beyond their mandate of conservation. Lastly, Catherine commented on the National and State partnership, and how this has “created a stronger protection for the old growth redwoods,” and how she values being able to support this protection through her work in a conservation non-profit.

Linda

Linda was born and raised in Crescent City, and has lived in Humboldt County ever since graduating high school. After graduating from Humboldt State, she spent a few years as a teacher before transitioning to counseling for the remainder of her professional life. As a member of the Tolowa Nation, she has been “quite involved” with the tribe for her entire life, including fighting for federal recognition and working with tribal organizations. She has also been extensively involved in a variety of education, counseling, and service organizations that do work locally in Northern California, the rest of the state, and internationally.

In our discussion of her photos, the dominant themes throughout were heritage, family, and the Tolowa Nation. On the first day she had the camera to take pictures, she went to Indian Day in Crescent City and took a picture of the Tolowa dancers, of which
two were her granddaughters. Linda mentioned how she “was there at the first dance when they started…over 50 years ago on the beachfront,” and how much things have changed since she was a child and her culture and language were kept carefully hidden by her parents and grandparents. Her family has lived in Crescent City for many generations, and she shared stories of both her grandparent’s houses, her and her family’s experience in the 1964 Good Friday Tsunami, and the many personally significant places in Crescent City and Del Norte.

Following from the theme of family, much of the time Linda spent in Jed Smith was with her family as a child, when they would go there “on sunny days for swimming and picnics.” She also noted her appreciation for Jed Smith’s interaction with the Tolowa people, both in hosting dances in the Park and in protecting the Tolowa cultural sites within the Park from disturbance by the general public. Though she values the Park for the protection it provides, she questioned the extent to which the Park limits access to different places within its boundaries, and whether it’s too restrictive for activities such as gathering that are inherently not destructive: “it's a hard line to draw between what's okay to do and what's not okay to do, and how much you could do of it and how much you shouldn't be doing.” Finally, she asserted the importance of having good visitor centers with opportunities to learn the full history of a place.

Maria

Maria has lived in Del Norte County for almost a decade, and during that time has worked multiple jobs with a variety of different natural-resource-oriented non-profits, agencies, and organizations. She remarked that she has moved around frequently while
working seasonal jobs, but that upon arriving in Del Norte to help with a fish count, it was the “first time I ever lived somewhere where I was like, I don't want to leave.” Though Maria said she values many aspects of this place, the Smith River is by far the most important aspect of Del Norte to her.

Two primary themes came up during our discussion – community and isolation – and Maria spoke about each in a variety of different ways. After first arriving in Del Norte, she described the importance of having a group of people around her that were like minded and doing similar work, and how after moving here she came to be connected with various communities in Del Norte. Maria also spoke about a few of the challenges facing the Del Norte community, including access to quality medical care and the lack of available housing. With regard to isolation, Maria related that living in Del Norte can be isolating, and specifically highlighted the ongoing construction and unstable geology of Highway 101 on a section known as Last Chance Grade as a constant reminder of the tenuous connection Del Norte has with Humboldt County and the rest of California. However, she stressed that this kind of isolation is not entirely negative, remarking that Del Norte’s clean water and air, available resources, and ability to grow food provides the community with an effective baseline for self-sufficiency.

Due to her work in the natural resources field, Maria has spent considerable time in her professional life within Jed Smith. Perhaps because of this, she said she feels “like I’ve fully experienced that area, I feel like I have a good grasp on it,” and that “there's so much available in this place for opportunities to get out in nature and go on a walk” that, now that she’s lived here for a while, she tends to go to places other than Jed Smith.
Beyond her own experience with the Park, Maria described the importance of Jed Smith to Del Norte County, both as an important part of the economy and a place that is protecting the places and things she finds important.

**Environment-Landscape**

All participants spoke about the importance of un-peopled places, the natural environment, and impacts to these places. In this section I detail the facets of the natural world participants described as valuable to them or adding meaning to Del Norte. Some participants described features of the natural environment as a reason to live in Del Norte, the most frequent of which were the Smith River and redwoods. Maria said that she “resisted the urge to just take 27 pictures of the river,” but that she “could have because it's that meaningful” to her. She continued that there are plenty of other natural parts of Del Norte that make her want to live here, including the coastline, mountains, and redwoods, but that the Smith was the most unique and important to her. The centrality of the natural world in many participants’ place meanings is why this section comes first, and most of the following sections relate back to meanings found in the environment.

**Del Norte is a place of unique natural phenomena**

Multiple participants described the Smith River, its importance to them and the area, and how it is a one-of-a-kind river (Figure 3). For example, Kathleen described how unique an experience it was to “be able to see 40 feet below you” in a river, while Travis said he tells people that fish with him that “this is the only place on the planet where you can stand with a wild steelhead and look at old growth redwood at the same time.” Like
Maria, both Kathleen and Travis described the Smith River as a central part of their perception of this place, as well as emblematic of Del Norte as a whole. Other participants described the unique biodiversity in Del Norte as something meaningful about this place. Multiple people described meaningful endemic species, and Jonathan described the California pitcher plant (*Darlingtonia californica*) as the “poster child of endemic plants in the Siskiyous” (Figure 4). Many participants described the abundance or diversity of habitats, wildlife, and landscapes as an important and unique part of Del Norte. The diversity of habitat types was the most common feature of this

![The Smith River, Jonathan](image-url)
code, with participants describing microhabitats, “7,000-foot peaks 15 miles from the coast” (Jonathan), and the ability to drive for only an hour and cross through multiple distinct watersheds and microclimates. Roger in particular used his pictures to stress the overlooked diversity that exists in Del Norte, remarking that people may picture the area as “its rugged coastline” or the redwoods and miss out on other meaningful places.

Some participants described Del Norte as home. To relative newcomers in the area, similar aspects to places they formerly lived made it feel like home (the ocean for Catherine), while others described Del Norte as being the first place they didn’t want to leave (Maria). Kathleen said that Jed Smith feels like home to her, and that there is “this

Figure 4: Darlingtonia californica along Douglas Park Road, Jonathan
sense of calmness [that] comes over, the smells, they smell like home.” Long-time residents described Del Norte as both home and a paradise, and a few linked the unique aspects of the environment to their attachment to Del Norte and their perception of it as such. For instance, Sasha remarked that “Amsterdam is pretty freaking awesome too, but it doesn’t hold a light to whatever this is, for me.”

**Del Norte is a place of aesthetic beauty**

Participants described places and features of Del Norte as beautiful, such as the Smith River, the drive over Last Chance Grade, and the fog that rolls in from the ocean. Maria described winter as one of the prettiest seasons, when “the river is raging.” She also described Beachfront Park near downtown Crescent City as a beautiful place, and that it is the place she “wants people to see when they come to Crescent City.”

Multiple participants went beyond everyday beauty and commented on the rugged nature of Del Norte and how that contributes to its beauty. Two people described the rugged coastline, and beaches that are “totally inaccessible except for a trail through it” (Travis, Figure 5).

Roger also highlighted the beautiful spots he values in Del Norte that might be overlooked for more well-known places. For example, he talked at length about the alluvial plain and mouth of the Smith River and the dunes that stretch along the coast as places he enjoys spending time, but that many other people might gloss over while visiting (Figure 6). He noted that “Del Norte is not just Jed Smith,” the redwoods, and the rugged coast, but that people living and visiting here don’t always see these places as he does.
Figure 5: Looking south from Endert’s Beach Overlook, Travis

Figure 6: A ranch off Kellogg Road in Smith River with dunes in the background, Roger
Multiple people noted that they had seen damage to the natural environment from human activities, and that this damage impinged on the natural beauty they and others value. Both Jonathan and Sasha discussed off-road ATVs as particularly damaging. Jonathan took a picture of damage to a skunk cabbage patch on Howland Hill Road, and said that seeing impacts in the Park was “always really upsetting...this wasn’t an accident. It was a clear off-roading in a little mud bog that they know about or saw, it’s clearly not where you're supposed to drive” (Figure 7).

![Image of damage to skunk cabbage patch and road pullout, Howland Hill Road, Jonathan](image_url)
Del Norte is a place to escape to nature

A common theme throughout many interviews was solitude in Del Norte, and ‘escape to nature’ describes seeking out solitude or tranquility in the natural world.

Arthur described the process of buying a house in Del Norte, saying that his dream was to live “at the end of a road, surrounded by government property on three sides, with five acres or more and running water through it.” In discussing some of her favorite coastal trails to walk on, Kathleen described feeling “as though you’re on a deserted island.” She also noted that the Smith River was her “happy place,” and that simply being near it provided her with a sense of balance and calm. Similarly, after moving away to Southern California for a time, Roger said one of the reasons for his return to the north was because Del Norte was “calmer, not as rushed or hurried.” Like Kathleen, one of the important places he sought out this sense of calm was the Smith River, saying that sitting and “watching it go into the ocean” was quite relaxing to him (Figure 8).

A few people, including Susan and Maria, described Jed Smith as one of these calm and quiet places. Susan remarked that in comparison to many other places in the state, you can find calm and relaxation in Jed Smith “without crowds and crowds of people.” Similarly, Maria explained that while the more popular spots in Jed Smith might get crowded, “as soon as you get off the beaten path…you can find epic places without people.”

A few participants noted that changes to Del Norte are beginning to impact the places they value for calm and tranquility. Arthur noted a concern for Del Norte’s preparedness for increasing tourism and how that could impact the sense of seclusion he
feels here. During a recent family trip to Yosemite, he was met with the kind of crowds he described could appear in Del Norte, and remarked that “the natural beauty didn’t overcome the masses of people.” Travis echoed Arthur’s concern about how Del Norte is preparing for influxes of people, noting that some places within Jed Smith are already being “loved to death.”

**Del Norte is a place of little human impact**

Many participants noted the natural and undisturbed character of Del Norte. While similar to escape to nature, which describes the active process of seeking out tranquil places, this section describes the value of undisturbed natural places beyond seeking them as a refuge from people and the built environment. Jonathan described how

![Figure 8: The mouth of the Smith River, Roger](image)
in Del Norte, “you're surrounded by more undeveloped land…than any other place in the whole country outside of Alaska,” and how this lack of development contributed to his “connection to the land and the seasons and community.” In his very first picture, Arthur noted that the Siskiyou Wilderness was that “first thing that attracted [him] to Del Norte County” because they “seemed like a less used area of California, so [he] had most opportunity to not run into people” (Figure 9).

Sasha talked about floating the Smith as one of her favorite summertime family activities. She made a distinction between different sections of the river, preferring places like Hiouchi where peoples’ “houses are back far enough that you don’t even really

Figure 9: View of the Siskiyou Wilderness, Arthur
notice unless you’re looking for them,” versus farther downstream where houses are right on the river. She felt that people should be able to build where they want to, but is bothered “that they build so close to the river. To that river especially. And it just, I don’t know, it feels intrusive.” Finally, she noted that this proximity to development is one of the unique features of the area that makes Jed Smith “a very different kind of park” to experience.

Arthur, Catherine, and Travis all described how the undeveloped places in Del Norte can remind them of the long past. When sitting on a bench on Boy Scout Tree Trail, Arthur noted that “you could imagine when 70% of the northern hemisphere was covered in redwoods that’s what it would have looked like…during the mammoth and sabre tooth tiger era.” Similarly, Travis noted that “if you were ever gonna see a dinosaur it’s gonna be off Howland Hill Road, I mean, it’s like a lost world.”

Multiple participants mentioned unnecessary infrastructure as taking away from places that would otherwise be natural. In describing the reverence he feels while in Stout Grove, Travis related a story of a time as a Parks employee when he argued against putting a raised deck around the Stout Tree: “I think that would detract from the feeling I get here, this religious feeling, this quiet, and all the sudden you put a deck there, you’ve introduced an element that I think will change the experience.” Jonathan talked about a cable car strung across the Smith River just upstream of Jed Smith as something interesting to talk about when he takes visitors on the Smith, but questioned what it was used for and whether “we could have one less thing strung across” the river (Figure 10).
Del Norte is a place to connect with the natural world

Travis and Catherine talked repeatedly about the felt experience and spirituality they find in places around Del Norte. Travis described Stout Grove as a place that was meaningful to him because of the experience he found there:

It’s hard to explain, it’s a religious experience, I mean it’s quiet, it’s like, even people walk through it hushed, it just affects people…and then as you walk through the grove and you walk right out onto the river, and you go wow...here’s this wild and scenic river running crystal clear, there might be a drift boat going by with a guy with a big old steelhead that’s jumping, you know...like I said, it doesn’t happen just anywhere.

Figure 10: Cable car strung across the Smith River just upstream of Jed Smith, Jonathan
Maria also talked about how she will bring “anyone at all, adventurous to my Mom” to Stout Grove because it “packs a punch.” About Jed Smith more generally, she commented that she finds “a lot of magic driving through” the Park, even after living in Del Norte for nearly a decade.

A few participants talked about learning from the natural world. Susan described learning “everything [redwoods] teach us about living thousands of years, what we need to do to take care of ourselves,” and said that whenever she is stressed out, redwoods provide her perspective: “these trees have been here for thousands and thousands of years, why am I stressing out? They’re going to be here for thousands and thousands of years once I’m gone.” Catherine also described how she and her husband have learned from the redwood forest ecosystem the best ways to care for their soil and garden, and have now shared this knowledge with the community through food forest and community garden programs (Figure 11).

Finally, many participants described being connected to the natural world, or finding connection to something greater in the natural world. Roger, Catherine, and Maria all described being near the ocean and Smith River as “relaxing” (Roger), making her “jubilant” (Maria), and able “to bring me back to reality” (Catherine). Catherine also described finding connection to something greater in nature, whether on a mountaintop, a Southeastern US long-leaf pine forest, or the redwoods: “just being in the forest in general definitely makes me feel connected to something…something greater.”

Some people described the intrinsic value of species and habitats as a meaningful part of Del Norte. Susan related a story of a bear coming onto her property to eat apples
from her trees, and remarked that “bears have lived here longer than we have. We’re taking over their territory too, we’re taking their land away from them, where do they go, how are they gonna survive? We have to know that we have to live with them.”

Catherine argued that “having old growth stands of forest are really important for life in general,” and Travis noted that Mill Creek in Jed Smith is critical habitat for “the future of silver salmon on the West Cost.”

Del Norte is a place to be a steward

Nearly every participant talked about stewardship of natural places, and how this is an important process for them and the general public to engage in in order to preserve

Figure 11: Crescent City Food Forest, Catherine
meaningful places into the future. Both Jonathan and Susan described their frustration and disappointment in seeing trash lying around, and their sense that the public wasn’t taking enough responsibility to care for public spaces. Jonathan said that education was important to help people understand why leaving trash and toilet paper along park trails negatively impacts these “special spots that we share collectively.” Susan also noted the lack of public responsibility for keeping places clean, saying that too many people simply walk by trash, but “if you want to live to be 100, you’ll squat down and pick that up and then walk it over to the garbage can.”

Participants also described their personal stake in being a steward, ranging from working with non-profits to buying property at the top of a watershed to ensure the headwaters are kept healthy. Kathleen grew up in Del Norte, and has observed a loss of diversity and abundance of wildlife in the tide pools she used to visit as a child. Seeing this loss, she describes how it “encourages me to show my daughter what kind of conservation efforts we can do to try to help our planet.”

Susan and Linda both talked about stewardship in terms of rights and responsibilities people have when accessing different places in the natural world. Susan said that although everyone has their own “perception of how [others] should live,” we still need to respect that not all people have the right to go anywhere or do anything they want. In discussing some of the spiritual places she visits, she described that it’s always a hard thing for me to share sometimes with people who are not of my tribe, because everybody wants to learn, everybody wants to know everything. And we don’t have to know everything in this world. We only need to know the things that are of interest to you and that will help you in your life to keep balanced.
She continued that the people seeking out spirituality in other cultures may not recognize that there are ways to do it, and it’s not always done in the right way, so they don’t understand why they don’t get the spirituality from that area. But you have to respect the role, your role going in there, and what you need to do for yourself before you go in that area...If you’re looking for spirituality go to your tribes, to your people, because everyone has that background. Everyone has the tradition and the culture, but because of the rapid settlement of North America, the continents, a lot of people lost that. And they’re trying to find it.

To her, the right to access these places is intimately linked with the personal responsibility and respect one must have for that place, and is something she felt has become decoupled, where rights are considered paramount to a sense of care or stewardship toward the land.

Linda also described the decoupling of rights and responsibility she has seen with respect to gathering places. Not only did she agree with Susan that access to these places has been largely curtailed through protected area regulations, she felt this came from a misunderstanding of what gathering actually is: “we're not going to destroy it. Take a little bit, make sure that there's a little bit that’s gonna keep growing.” She also noted a tension she feels between seeing the “need for protecting” these places and seeing “other cultures come in and then overuse” and degrade them, and that “it is a hard line to draw about who can use and how much they can use it. How to be equitable.” Equitably stewarding places in Del Norte likely requires a closer look at who is considered a proper steward, the activities thought to be contributing to stewardship, and the people or institutions that get to decide the who and what of stewardship.
**Del Norte is a place of environmental health**

Environmental health, while related to stewardship, is distinct enough to be given its own section. Stewardship refers to an active process of caring for the natural world that people are involved in, whereas environmental health describes people benefiting from a part of the environment that already exists in that state. Environmental health, particularly clean water, was a meaningful aspect of Del Norte for many participants.

Maria described a spring with potable water near Rock Creek Ranch as a source of water for camp hosts, hikers, and for her when she lived for a time in a field house near the spring (Figure 12). Kathleen described both clean air and water as important for her and her daughter, and how they are “conducive to a healthy lifestyle and being active” in the outdoors. Similarly, Susan noted the importance of maintaining a clean environment, saying “we still fish, we still gather, and if things happen that our food population diminishes, then we’re in trouble.”

Maria discussed local lily bulb farming practices as particularly detrimental to the health of the environment, especially to the groundwater and Smith River (Figure 13). Because the bulbs must be put into a false winter, they are “pretty heavily doped in poison essentially,” and the chemicals put on the bulbs eventually make their way into groundwater and waterways, affecting “fisheries health and the health of the community.”
Figure 12: Steven Spring on the South Fork of the Smith River, Maria

Figure 13: Entryway sign for Smith River, CA, the Lily Bulb Capital of the World, Maria
Del Norte is a place of sustenance

The ability to access resources for survival in the natural world of Del Norte was meaningful to a few people. Of the Tolowa people, Susan remarked that “we kept ourselves alive through remembering all these places, and what we could gather there because it’s not just fishing, there are other things along Wilson Creek, the plants and stuff that you can eat or use as medicine, or driftwood for your fire to keep you warm” (Figure 14). This resonates with her previous assertion of the importance of keeping the rivers and environment clean, because she and others still gather.

Catherine, Kathleen, and Maria all discussed the importance of having access to local food, and in particular the community that forms around the reciprocity of providing for one another. Catherine and Maria both discussed the importance of the local farmers market, and Catherine said that she “feels really connected with the community just from going and purchasing goods from local people at the farmer’s markets.” She also questioned whether the community would be as active without opportunities like this. Kathleen described the importance of canning and preserving her own food, how diverse a table you can lay out with just foods obtained locally (from salmon and crab to berries and mushrooms), and how she enjoys sharing her stores with friends, family, and community.

A critical aspect of sustenance is the ability to access places to gather, fish, or hunt. Linda and Susan both talked about the sheer amount of publicly owned land in Del Norte, and how “if you look at the access, there are very few, small accessible areas.” Susan clarified this comment by saying:
we want to go see what kind of trees grow in this area because we’re looking for acorns, or we’re looking for berries, whatever, that’s the kind of accessibility I’m talking about. I don’t want accessibility to go look at the redwood tree that grows here versus the redwood tree that grows there, I’m talking about surviving.

Figure 14: Wilson Creek in fog, Susan
Recreation-Exploration

Many participants discussed recreating and exploring, and because of the value of the outdoors to many participants, it is unsurprising that an important aspect of their place meanings was grounded in doing things in the outdoors. The primary distinction between recreating and exploring is intent. For recreation, the physical activity participants undertook was the primary purpose of being in the outdoors. For exploration, the activity people chose was less important than its ability to facilitate feelings of wonderment, curiosity, or to learn more about a place.

Del Norte is a place to explore

For many participants, the ability to explore, be curious about new places, or adopt different perspectives about places they already knew was something they valued about living in Del Norte.

The value of being able to explore in the outdoors was brought up by a few different people, though with different perspectives on Del Norte. Catherine grew up on the East Coast exploring the Appalachian Mountains, and she said the first thing that drew her to the West was her desire to “hike any amount of the Pacific Crest Trail.” After completing the PCT and moving to Del Norte to live, she said that the sheer number of opportunities to go out and explore new places has been an important factor in “keeping me feeling connected here,” and that “there’s just so much here. It never ends.” To her, Del Norte was an ideal place to seek out these opportunities to explore. Similarly, Sasha noted that “if you are an adventurer, Del Norte County was made for you.”
Arthur had the opposite stance on Del Norte and the opportunities it afforded him to explore new places. As someone who has lived here for decades, he noted that he feels “like I’ve just been here too long. I’ve seen it all, done it all, I’ve hiked every trail, I’ve driven every road, you know, it’s like I need something new.” He continued that he feels now that he wants to “go move somewhere else and completely change everything.”

Unlike Catherine and Arthur, Maria distinguished between different places in Del Norte, describing Jed Smith as a place she has “fully experienced,” to the point that she can do “on the spot interpretation” when she brings visitors there. Her sentiments about the rest of Del Norte aligned more with Catherine’s, that it is full of opportunity to explore new places.

Travis discussed how the process of exploring places, old or new, evoked in him a sense of curiosity and wonderment: “I’ll look at a piece of driftwood on the beach and I’ll think to myself, I wonder where this tree was alive.” He mentioned that parks in particular evoked this sense in him, and that observing different parts of the environment from driftwood to “insulators on redwoods where they ran the wire” make him curious about how that place looked and felt in the past.

Finally, Kathleen talked about taking a different perspective on places she’s been before. While discussing some of the frustrations she has with living in Del Norte, Kathleen noted that driving on some of the two-lane highways in and out of Crescent City can be bothersome, particularly in tourist season when drivers are going much slower than the speed limit to take in all the sights. To combat her frustration with these
drivers, she described her process of adopting the perspective of someone seeing these places for the first time:

Instead of being angry that, oh my gosh, please just use the turnout, you're going 25 miles under the speed limit, let me just pass by you, I've gotta get home, I've gotta get to town, or whatever, I try to take it as, and teach my daughter, that, imagine driving here and seeing the Smith River for the first time. Imagine seeing a redwood tree for the first time.

She noted that this shift in perspective not only helped curb her frustration, but also allowed her to better appreciate the place she lives. It is also interesting to note that locals and newcomers differ in the way they explore Del Norte.

Del Norte is a place to recreate

Nearly every participant mentioned the importance of recreation opportunities to their sense of place. Themes within this category included types and diversity of recreation opportunities, ease of access, and reasons to recreate.

One of the common ways in which participants expressed the importance of recreation to them was in detailing the abundance and diversity of recreational opportunities available in Del Norte. Jonathan, Sasha, Catherine, Kathleen, Travis, and Maria all talked about the importance of the Smith River to them and the recreation they can access on it. Jonathan noted that the Middle Fork of the Smith goes through a gorge just upstream of Jed Smith with “class four to five whitewater” (Figure 15), while Maria talked about the North Fork Gorge having both a long whitewater rafting section and some of the warmest water in the summertime, which is why it’s her “go to spot for swimming.” Catherine said that “there's about 16 miles of the Smith River that you can canoe in the summer” that has much calmer water than the rapids sought by rafters.
Kathleen said she’s “an avid kayaker,” and that while “summer kayaking is fun, winter kayaking is why I live here, it’s a mecca.” Beyond floating the river, Sasha talked about the variety of swimming holes on the Smith and Travis described his passion for steelhead fishing, and how many people are drawn to the river to do that as well.

Out of the water, Arthur said that his introduction to Del Norte was through “exploring the backcountry” on his 4-wheeler and hiking. Kathleen said that mountain biking is a huge part of her and her daughter’s lives, and that she especially values being able to leave on her bike straight from her house (Figure 16). Catherine offered her perspective on the diversity of recreation in Del Norte, which sums up what others have said:

Why I really like Del Norte County, is…you can be swimming, you can be snowshoeing, you can be doing all of these different outdoor activities all in the same day. I mean, I could be swimming in the river and snowshoeing in the same day in the winter. It’s amazing.

For many of these participants, the ability to connect with the natural world through recreation at almost any point during the year and through a wide variety of modalities was a significant feature of their sense of place.

The ease with which they could access these recreation opportunities was important to a handful of participants as well. Maria said that what Del Norte “has to offer is a lot of access” to recreation, and that this was one of the things that keeps her living here. As someone who highly valued recreation, Kathleen described some of the facets of access she values about Del Norte, including accessibility for beginners/learners (e.g. surfing), the accessibility of parks like Jed Smith as places to recreate, and the
Figure 15: Middle Fork of the Smith River, Jonathan

Figure 16: Kathleen’s daughter leaving for school on her bike
access she enjoys from her own home. In summary, she said that Del Norte is “an outdoor recreation destination.”

With regards to Jed Smith, Jonathan, Susan, Linda, Roger, Catherine, and Maria all agreed that the Park is a convenient and accessible place to recreate on the trail system, in the Smith River, and at the campground. Catherine remarked that “accessibility is usually a big part” of why she brings family or other visitors there as opposed to the longer and more rigorous trails she might visit on her own. While many agreed that most of Jed Smith is accessible, Sasha talked about the day-use beach on the Smith River as a place that is lacking in accessibility:

Not very many people can afford it on a [regular basis], you know, if you wanna go swimming every day, which a lot of our families do especially in the summer, that’s where they do their child care is at the Park…you can’t afford to go every day to Jed Smith. So, you pick somewhere else to go, somewhere that isn’t necessarily as safe.

A handful of participants explicitly discussed how they value recreation for the escape it provided them. Susan said that “when I do things like camping I’m more of a loner camper than I am a social camper.” She continued that she does enjoy being around people, but not the crowds that you often find at well-established campgrounds like those in the State and National Parks. This sentiment of avoiding the crowded campgrounds in Del Norte was shared by many participants, and they said that many locals go farther into the mountains to areas like Panther Flat to camp. As a frequent hiker, Catherine said that she tends to pick “trails that I don’t see as many people” or “places where you have to hike a little farther.” She added that seeing people on these trails actually contributes to her connection to Del Norte, and that the reason she seeks out quieter or longer trails is
because she “works around people all week. When I try to go out to do a hike, it’s my personal time so I just try to get away from people.”

Sasha took a picture of one of the ponds across from South Beach, and in discussing it mentioned her surprise that no one took a kayak out onto it (Figure 17). After more discussion, she noted that she suspects people don’t recreate there because it “looks like it’s right on the highway” and that many Del Norte residents might “pass by it every day on [their] way to work.” If people want to recreate in this area, Sasha noted that they are much more likely to want to “get away from it all” and find a place that’s more removed from other people and their everyday lives.

Figure 17: Pond across from South Beach, Sasha
Finally, Susan talked about recreating as a way for her to get to important places. She said she has “spiritual places I go to that I didn’t go to as a child. Most of them are places that I have to walk into.” She continued that recreation is a way for her to support her physical health in addition to her spiritual health.

**Human-Social**

Nearly all participants spoke about the importance of interactions with other people or groups of people, and how these interactions contributed to their value and meanings for Del Norte. These interactions included learning from or educating others, engaging with the Del Norte community or groups within the community, aspects of escape and isolation as they relate to community, and the importance of family and friends. I will use the term community to refer to the geographic area of Del Norte (in the context of this work that means north of Wilson Creek), whereas group will be used to describe non-geographically bounded sub-communities that exist within Del Norte.

**Del Norte is a place to learn and educate**

Education came up for nearly all participants as an important aspect of interacting with other people. Many, though not all, of the instances of education and learning people discussed had to do with place meanings they associated with the natural world, and why those places were meaningful to them. Topics included being able to pass on or share knowledge, influence others, opportunities to learn, and lack of awareness.

Throughout our interview, Susan talked about the importance of passing on knowledge: “I think as an elder it’s important for me to share my knowledge that I have
for our tradition and culture, for the Xus, that’s our name for ourselves. Tolowa is a Yurok word for us. So, our word for ourselves is Xus.” She discussed how she first participated in a Tolowa dance at Guschu Hall as a 16-year-old when they were first being revived, and how she now passes on that cultural knowledge to “the younger ones.”

In his work as an outfitter, Jonathan described taking visitors on bike tours and sharing with them why certain places in Del Norte are special. For example, he enjoys taking people to Mill Creek to talk about how “it’s the most important habitat for Coho salmon, the most endangered salmon in California and throughout the Northwest” (Figure 18). Susan also said she “enjoyed being tour guide” for visitors and newcomers to Del Norte, and told a story of how just recently she brought her new neighbor to Nickerson Ranch Trail in Jed Smith. Similarly, Arthur talked about always bringing out of town guests to the Parks to “show them features that they wouldn’t normally see and to try to educate people on the reason [the Parks are] here and what they stand for.”

Beyond participants sharing what they felt was meaningful about places, they also discussed the importance of sharing the feeling and experience of a place. Travis talked about doing interpretive work with Jed Smith, and how one of the best parts of that experience was “getting people to have that sense of wonder and appreciation for what we have in California.” Sharing the feeling of a place was also important in his discussion of Stout Grove because it was the feeling he found there that imbued it with meaning for him. Arthur described the importance of sharing within his own family, and talked about how this played out on their half hour drives to and from Crescent City while bringing their children to school. He said that the topics were wide ranging, including “what
they’re going through in school, how are their friends, what about the natural environment, why do we live where we live,” and that this daily opportunity for conversation was important in forming strong familial connections.

Many participants described different opportunities to learn, and the importance of taking advantage of these opportunities. Sasha mentioned the Park visitor centers, and how many locals don’t avail themselves of these resources to learn about different trails and recreation opportunities, but that “we probably should.” Linda also described the importance of visitor centers accurately telling the Tolowa history in the area: “I want

Figure 18: Mill Creek near Howland Hill Road, Jonathan
people to know more about who we were, people all through here…That there was a
history here…pre- and post-contact.” She noted that “the beautiful spots were not only
beautiful to the people who arrived, but the people who lived there initially,” and that it is
crucial to recognize that the Tolowa and other indigenous people were pushed off their
land, “they did lose something, because most people don't think about those things. And
it's not a pretty part of history, but it is a part of history, what happened.” As a former
Parks employee, Travis similarly remarked about the need for a
good visitor center that highlights the Native American culture in this
area…not just from the point of view of getting people to stop, but for
getting them to understand what happened up here.

Susan and Kathleen both described gaining perspective from visitors. For Susan,
this perspective came from talking with people visiting Del Norte, because “they open
your eyes sometimes to like, oh, I never thought of it that way.” Kathleen thought about
gaining perspective in a different way – thinking like you are seeing things in Del Norte
for the first time. She described how this process of thinking like a visitor in awe of
“seeing the Smith River…[or] a redwood tree for the first time” helped alleviate the
frustration she has when people drive too slowly on the roads out of Crescent City, and is
something she tries to teach her daughter.

Both Arthur and Travis talked about influencing others’ perception of places in
Del Norte through their work in the Parks Service. For Arthur, he was passionate about
the National and State Parks partnership and took the time to bring new staff members up
to speed whenever a position turned over, explaining to them how the partnership worked
and why it was important. Travis discussed his part in a decision about whether to put a
deck around Stout Tree, and how his stance was based on both the importance of protecting the trees and ecosystem as well as the protecting the experience of being in Stout Grove.

Finally, about half of the participants brought up lack of awareness as something that impacted different places in Del Norte. Sasha took a picture of a sign of a wildlife area in Del Norte to exemplify that there may not be enough signage or education about how outdoor spaces are designated and the kinds of activities that are allowed there, which can lead people to “just use the space and ask forgiveness later.” She also spoke to the perceived lack of awareness residents of Del Norte seem to have about the multitudes of outdoor spaces available to them, a sentiment echoed by Arthur: “It just astonishes me that people can live in this town, or Klamath, or Brookings, and not even know what’s several miles away.” Catherine made a similar observation during a Siskiyou Wilderness monitoring program, that “the highest impact of people not being very Leave No Trace, out in these areas, were Del Norte County residents.” She continued by speculating that lack of education was at the root of this trend: “when you grow up in this area where you have these vast swaths of public lands and wilderness areas, but yet you grow up in a downtown city area, there’s very little education of how to keep these places pristine.”

With regards to Jed Smith, Sasha commented that she feels like visitors might be confused by the southern Howland Hill Road entrance to the Park, where they drive “into basically a wall of trees without a whole lot of fanfare.” Kathleen also noted that if she had a bucket list for the Park, she would appreciate seeing a big arch or entryway sign when you enter the Park. Not only would this help visitors who lack the awareness of
locals about the entrances to the Park, but it would help bolster a community sense of pride for being “the heart of Redwood National and State Park” (Kathleen).

**Del Norte is a place of community**

Nearly every participant brought up the Del Norte community and how it ties to their place meanings. On the positive side, people discussed topics such as reciprocity, community wellbeing, and connection to community. Community challenges were also discussed, and the most common negative aspect of the community was isolation and lack of resources.

**Benefits of community.** A common point of discussion for many participants was people coming together to support the Del Norte community, or groups within Del Norte. Susan discussed her work as an employee and board member of United Indian Health Services (UIHS) and how they were “always looking for ways to improve healthcare, ways to implement new programs that might be available to us, ways to better the healthcare that we did provide, and then just keeping up on what’s out there and what’s going on and how can we provide healthcare to our people.” She noted that UIHS has been successful in providing for the health of the indigenous community, and that the importance of community involvement and support originated in her youth:

We just learned growing up that whatever community you lived in, whether it’s your Indian community, the white community, whatever, you need to support your community. And so, I do that however I can.

Sasha also described community support through her involvement with the Redwoods Happiness Initiative (RHI) and how this group grew after the 2011 tsunami and a perceived increase in “people around [here] dealing with a lot of depression and
sadness.” After partnering with a woman who had started similar groups in other cities on the West Coast, the group conducted a survey of Del Norte residents that found that “most people in Del Norte County, at least the ones we surveyed, did not feel connected to anyone in their community, they felt isolated, and they had difficulty with depression and sadness.” To address this, RHI has started a variety of community support projects, ranging from holding signs on street corners saying things like “you are enough [and] one breath at a time” to coordinating the construction of a labyrinth at Beachfront Park.

Kathleen talked about the mix of seclusion and support she feels now that she lives in a very small town in Del Norte, and how these two features both contribute to her sense of community there: people may have “been neighbors for 40 years and they don’t talk, but they have each other’s backs if they need it.” Maria and Catherine both discussed how meeting and volunteering for local farmers has helped them connect with the community as relative newcomers to the area. For Catherine, it “wasn’t until [she] really started connecting with more people at the farmer’s markets” that she felt connected to the Del Norte community, and this connection has also contributed to her feeling supported by and able to support the community because “everyone needs to eat.” For Maria, one farm in particular is “like a second family” to her, and she described them as the people who supported her in developing connections to the Del Norte community when she first moved here.

The final major aspect of community support that people discussed was collaboration between groups within Del Norte. Susan and Linda both described the importance of Guschu (Redwood) Hall to the Tolowa Nation (Figure 19). It was
originally built in the late 1920s as a collaborative effort with the Smith River Methodist Church, and was later the site of the “rebirth of Tolowa Nation dancing” (Linda). Susan talked about participating in this first dance as a 16-year-old, and how Guschu Hall was the place where she started “learning that stuff that I didn’t know about growing up.”

Catherine described a recent planning meeting she attended for Redwoods Rising, a collaborative project located in the Mill Creek watershed in Redwood National Park geared towards restoring former timberlands, as an example of inter-group collaboration. She noted that in this meeting, “there were people from all over, members of the public, members of the tribes, CalFire, all the different agencies” involved in asking and answering questions about the project, and that she sensed that people left the meeting

Figure 19: Guschu (Redwood) Hall, Susan
feeling good about where things were at, even though many questions remained unanswered. Maria similarly discussed a planning meeting she attended for Beachfront Park, and how there are a range of different groups that are interested in collaborating in the space to improve it. She described how in this meeting “a fairly unlikely character … stood up” to support a project she was involved in, again noting inter-group collaboration for a public space project. While the Del Norte community can come together for large-scale projects, Maria noted that generally, “we're not a come together happy community, we have our little pockets of community,” and that she feels these groups are “isolated from each other unless we're deliberately involved in the affairs of others for work or something.” She continued that because of this isolation, “the people who can thrive or survive [in Del Norte] have the ins,” and that “who you know is really, really important because there's just so little resources available for people.”

A related topic to community support and reciprocity was feeling connected to or involved in the community. For Catherine, the connections she formed with farmers at the farmers market, as well as through the work she’s done on food forest projects, have made her feel tied to the Del Norte community. Sasha described spending time with friends while disc golfing at Beachfront Park, and that even though she “could really care less” about actually playing the game, the social aspect of being there and chatting with friends is something she found quite valuable (Figure 20). For Susan, Wilson Creek is a significant place that evokes fond memories of community. She recalled smelt fishing there with her family and friends as a child, and remarked that “a lot of other people fish
there, we weren’t the only ones,” and that it reminds her of “the comradery, the friendship, [and] all of the people you knew who are no longer with us.”

The idea that Del Norte is comprised of many groups came up with many participants, and some described the importance of these groups to them. Kathleen took a picture of the Gasquet Post Office to “showcase…the interpersonal connections in small communities.” She talked about how there are pros and cons to rural living, but that these interpersonal relationships are quite important to her. Her relationship with the Gasquet postmaster is such that if she goes a few days without picking up a package, the postmaster will text her a reminder.

Figure 20: Disc golf hole at Beachfront Park, Sasha
For Arthur, the group he valued most was the staff at RNSP when he worked there. During the discussion of his photos, Arthur described some of the challenges he faced when working in Crescent City, particularly the feeling of it being too crowded and his dislike of the built environment, but that the people he worked with were the “saving grace.” He said that “every counterpart in this office that I’ve worked with has been a phenomenal experience to the point where we’re even very close friends in retirement,” highlighting the importance of this community to him and its power to offset the challenges of the job.

One of the most important themes for Linda was the Tolowa Nation community. She said that she has been “quite involved for quite a few years” with Tolowa Nation activities, from going to see her two granddaughters dance at Indian Day in Crescent City to fighting for federal recognition for the Tolowa Nation and looking towards a collective “future as a tribe” (Figure 21). In discussing some of the history of the area, she described how in the 1930’s the Civilian Conservation Corps dug up multiple graves around Lake Earl, including one of “the great-grandmother of one of our current members,” and the pain and grief that caused the family and the Tolowa Nation. She commented that the protection of these sites is of critical importance, and that part of this protection comes from educating people about the violence that happened during colonization to the people already living in what we now call Del Norte. When asked what the most important thing she would like people to take away from her contributions at the conclusion of the interview, Linda said “the native presence,” which reaffirmed a comment she made earlier on: “we are still a part of the people and from this place.”
Community challenges. Maria framed her photo discussion around community, and chose two pictures that allowed her to focus in on the perceived lack of resources, as well as other challenges to the Del Norte community. The first picture was of Sutter Coast Hospital, which she commented is “a huge controversy in this town” (Figure 22). Access to adequate healthcare is an issue for many of the rural counties in northern California and southern Oregon, and Maria described a few specific facets of this issue and how they impact the Del Norte community. First, “they lack doctors who will stay in the area,” and she perceived that many only came to Del Norte to get experience with rural health before applying to a hospital in “a place they want to live.” Second, and

Figure 21: Tolowa dancers at Crescent City Indian Day, Linda
perhaps more importantly, she said the hospital is “a giant corporation who cares little of
the community.” This is made more acute by the fact that Del Norte lacks the diversity of
healthcare options available to larger population centers. Maria summed up this point by
remarking that many of the older folks she’s talked with in Del Norte about access to
healthcare say that it’s one of the things you give up by living here, and that “you have to
be ready for that and willing to travel to Oregon essentially to get what you need.” The
second picture Maria took to showcase challenges of living in Del Norte was of a
vacation rental property (Figure 23). To her, it represented the difficulty of finding
housing in Del Norte, particularly rentals, which she said is exacerbated by the fact that
the county has “put no cap on vacation rentals.” Her biggest concern with this lack of
regulation is that it could get to a point where there aren’t “any people who actually live
in this community.” She finished by saying that health and housing issues are a “common
thread in this community….Any potential renters here have this problem and anyone
who's ever had a health issue has that problem.” Although Maria was critical of practices
and industries she saw as detrimental to the Del Norte community, she was also in a
position to view it as “nobody here is deliberately trying to make this place worse or hurt
it. Everybody has the intention of wanting this to be the best place it can be.”

There were a few other community challenges brought up by other participants,
including the availability of jobs (Catherine) and a lack of intra-community
Figure 22: Sign for Sutter Coast Hospital, Crescent City, Maria

Figure 23: Sign for a vacation rental property on Pebble Beach Drive, Maria
communication, particularly on public space projects that can affect the community at large (Sasha). However, the most common challenge brought up about living in Del Norte was isolation.

Del Norte County is geographically isolated, with Highways 101 and 199 acting as the only connectors to Humboldt County to the South, and Oregon to the North. This isolation was felt by many of the participants, and some used their photos to talk about the challenges it presents. Catherine commented that Del Norte is “kind of an island,” and that she perceived that many people in the community have self-sufficiency on their minds. She noted that “landslides, accidents, [and] boulders in the middle of the road” all have the potential to completely cut off one of the three roads leaving Del Norte. The section of Highway 101 that goes over Last Chance Grade just south of Crescent City was a particularly sore spot for many people. Linda commented that that road is “in dire need of a change” before Del Norte can “expect a lot of tourism” if the roads are keeping people from coming in the first place (Figure 24). Maria agreed, saying “it's not great for Crescent City and the economy that we have this road on the verge of falling into the ocean and isolating us from the rest of California.” Though much of the focus on the isolation of Del Norte was about the challenges it presents, Maria had a positive spin on it as well: “we have clean water, we have resources, we can grow our own food…[and] if we were to be isolated, I think Del Norte could thrive in the long run.”

**Del Norte is a place of family and friends**

Many participants spoke about the value of family and friends in the meanings they associate with Del Norte. This theme is similar to community, but describes the
tight-knit relationships people have with family and friends, as opposed to the more
casual or professional relationships they might have with a broader community or group.
There were a few major categories, including place-based-memories, family as a reason
to live in Del Norte, and heritage.

Kathleen centered the importance of family from her very first photo, which was
of her daughter and her, and commented that “she is the main reason that I moved back
here, …for her to be raised near family.” She also took a picture at Crescent Beach
Overlook, which she said overlooks one of her favorite beaches in Del Norte and also
“represents the quality time” she and her daughter spend recreating and being outside
together. She also described how Jed Smith has a special place in her heart after her
mother passed, who called the Park “her heaven.” In the Park there is a “big giant rock
with trees growing out of the top of it” that her mother loved, and now Kathleen has

a special place that I can go in Jed Smith that is my mom’s place, that’s
her heaven, and that’s where I feel closest to my mom…so it’s something
that every Mother’s Day we go out to the rock and visit Grandma.

Susan recalled two memories of significant places and her experience with family
there. Her seventh picture was of Endert’s Beach Lookout, and she described how she
enjoys going up there because it reminds her of the Sunday drives she would take with
her sister and relatives:

We used to go on Sunday drives all the time. And we’d go gather, fish, or
just picnic or whatever, and in the summer time we always went
swimming on the Smith River. Grandma would make a big dinner and my
dad and my Grandpa and them would all come home from work and we
would all just take off and go to the river. We’d just stay there until the
sun’s way down or gone.

She also talked about taking family camping trips up in the mountains, and said one of
her favorite things was stopping at a water fountain along Highway 199 on their way
back to town: “we’d run for the fountain, because whoever got there first got to put their
thumbs on it and whoever went to get a drink got sprayed.” However, the water fountain
is no longer there because that stretch of road had to be replaced when a truck hit a
nearby bridge, and now she “really misses that little water fountain” because of the fond
memories she associated with it.

Lastly, Roger talked about Jed Smith and the significant childhood memories he
associates with it. As someone who grew up in Klamath and with a large extended family
in Del Norte, the Park was the place to go over the summers. He noted that his family
“didn’t have money to go anywhere” far away for summer vacations, but “for two weeks out of each summer we would load up with camping stuff and my cousins here in Crescent City and we would go to Jed Smith and we’d camp in the campground.” He described enjoying swimming in the Smith and crossing to Stout Grove before the bridge was put in, as well as simply “laying around doing absolutely nothing,” and connected these childhood memories with his present-day gratitude that “we preserved” the Park.

A handful of participants described their heritage as something that connected them to Del Norte. One of the pictures Susan discussed was of the Crescent City cemetery (Figure 25). This place was significant to her because much of her family has been buried there, and she talked about the importance of being able to visit them from time to time. She remarked that even though her parents were cremated and were not physically buried there, having a set of headstones “so I can go talk to them when I want to” made this “one of [her] favorite places.” In addition to the cemetery being a place to visit family, she shared that it was also “very nice and quiet there, nobody bothers you,” and that she valued the tranquility of being there. About Del Norte more broadly, she noted that the Tolowa

had all these little villages around. And so, growing up we knew they were all there even though they weren’t there in existence anymore, but we just learned our history, and that’s what I love about my country is the history that no one really knows about, but that we have stories about.

Linda similarly described a number of significant places related to her heritage, including the cemetery where much of her family is buried, which she said is “an important place to go back and visit.” She also took pictures of and discussed a historical
marker on Pebble Beach Drive that her mother and aunt fought to get put up, indicating where her grandparent’s house was located before the city condemned it and demanded they move or have their children sent to boarding school (Figure 26). Not only did her grandparents move, they moved the entire house with them to be rebuilt on a lot just outside of the city. Although it doesn’t make up for the wrongs, Linda said that “we’re really happy that this, at least there's a rock that acknowledges that site and that it was taken, and that happened.”

**Del Norte is a place to escape from people**

A theme similar to, yet distinct from, escape to nature is escape from people. While the former is concerned with natural spaces acting as a pull for people, the latter
describes people intentionally seeking out places (push) that are quiet or secluded, regardless of whether they are natural or manmade. About half of the participants discussed escape from people, including seeking calm or retreat and avoiding Crescent City.

Multiple participants discussed seeking out recreation opportunities, particularly hiking and camping, where the crowds weren’t. Maria said that she “tends to avoid the more popular parts” of the parks and protected areas in Del Norte, Arthur mentioned that he’s “not a people person,” and that was one of the reasons he was drawn to the Siskiyous as a place to live, and Susan related that she’s “more of a loner camper than a social camper.”

Figure 26: Historical marker near Pebble Beach Drive, Linda
Kathleen discussed what living in Gasquet feels like to her, and said she and her daughter live there to “retreat from the hustle and bustle.” She went on to say that since she transitioned to a job that is no longer in Crescent City, she now goes there “as rarely as possible,” instead opting to travel to Brookings or Cave Junction for things like grocery shopping. Arthur shared this sentiment about preferring to travel to other towns for errands, saying that he could “count on one hand how many time I've come to Crescent City in [the] three years” since his retirement.

One of the most interesting things that came up within this theme was a tension that existed between wanting people to come visit Del Norte, for both practical reasons like supporting the local economy and so participants could share the place they live and enjoy, and wanting to retain the rural and secluded character of this place. Susan said that she often plays tour guide when she has visitors in town and that she “loves to have visitors, but you can all go home now.” Similarly, Sasha shared that she is “kinda persnickety about the fact that this is my space, go away. And yet on the flipside, I love sharing Del Norte County, I love it when people come and they're like, oh my gosh this is paradise. And I’m like, yeah, we know, go home.” Lastly, Roger wanted to highlight some of the overlooked place in Del Norte with his pictures, and suggested that the county advertise places like Kellogg Beach to show visitors the true diversity of landscapes in the area. He later noted that despite wanting to share these places, he didn’t “know if as a resident [he] wanted it advertised.” Like many participants, the ability to experience meaningful places in relative seclusion seems to be important to Roger, and sharing those places with visitors necessarily reduces that seclusion.
Change and adaptation

A major theme for many participants was what the future looks like. Some noted their concerns for the future, with community growth and an influx of new people as the most common concerns, and a few also noted their perceptions of why some people in the Del Norte community might be resistant to change. Though participants did cite concerns about the future of the environment, the majority had to do with the Del Norte community. These concerns for the future are important, because they shed light on what people currently find meaningful about Del Norte and believe should be preserved into the future.

Maria and Roger both noted that some of the major industries in town, particularly fishing and timber, have been resistant towards the transition to a tourism economy. Maria said that she wants the “old guard to give up its dreams of one day logging the redwoods, because it’s clearly not going to happen.” Similarly, Roger noted that “the old fishermen [say] this is a working harbor, this is not for tourism.” Both followed these statements by arguing that Del Norte needs to embrace the increasing tourism to the area, particularly by recognizing that the redwood forests and the harbor are both places that draw tourists in. Kathleen said that “it’s taken 50 years for the locals to embrace and acknowledge that this is our future, tourism is our future,” and Catherine agreed, saying the “Park system in general is the economic force behind everything in this area now.” Roger finished by saying that many people thought “fishing, timber, it's always going to be here…we don't need to look at the tourism. But that has gone away as the industry shrinks, and there's more of a focus on the tourism.”
For Travis and Sasha, climate change was a big concern, particularly with how it could affect the redwoods and the Del Norte community. As someone who spent his career working for the Parks, Travis said that he often ponders “what are these parks gonna be like in a hundred years…do we have the foresight to make it better, to improve it, to protect it, to do all of that?” After talking about the tension she felt between wanting to share Del Norte with other people and wanting to preserve its secluded character, Sasha noted that she believes “climate migration” is something Del Norte needs to be prepared for. Similar to Maria’s stance that coastal Del Norte is relatively sheltered from events like fires which are common throughout the rest of California, Sasha described that she thinks people will begin to come to Del Norte to escape these events. She said that just last year “when the fires happened last year in Redding and Paradise…within a week our population in our school grew.”

This concern for the preparedness of Del Norte for an influx of new residents and visitors was shared by other participants as well, and overlaps significantly with the tension some participants noted between welcoming visitors and wanting to keep Del Norte as it is. Arthur suggested that Del Norte “is gonna become a destination by itself, but if it’s not ready for it it’s gonna take forever to capitalize on.” He continued that he sees increasing tourism and population as the next conflict in Del Norte, particularly if steps are not taken soon to prepare the county for it.
Jedediah Smith State Park

While most of the information about Jed Smith was presented interwoven in the themes outlined above, there were enough unique themes about the Park to warrant its own section. The participants all discussed Jed Smith in a variety of ways, and beyond the ways in which direct interaction with the Park influenced their sense of place, many discussed institutional or broader reaching ways in which Jed Smith impacts them and their community. It seemed that although participants discussed a wide variety of places around Del Norte, Jed Smith was a focal point for both the positive aspects of this place (e.g. escape, natural environment) and the negative (e.g. concerns about degradation from overuse or crowding). An important caveat is that this focus on Jed Smith could be stemming from the fact that participants were prompted to consider the Park while taking their pictures, and were told upon starting that process that it would be an important part of their interview. Common topics included bureaucracy, the ways in which it is a unique park, and the importance of Jed Smith to Del Norte County.

The most frequently mentioned aspect of bureaucracy brought up by participants was the National and State Parks partnership. While the National Park Service (NPS) has ongoing partnerships with a variety of state, local, tribal, and non-governmental entities across the United States, only a handful of these partnerships exist in National Parks (as opposed to recreation areas, historical parks, or national monuments). Given the uniqueness of the partnership, as well as the uniqueness of RNSP as a multi-unit, multi-
jurisdictional park, there exist an equally unique set of benefits and challenges for the Del Norte community.

Many participants spoke about the difference in community relations between the National and State Parks. Arthur shared that he was working at Prairie Creek Redwoods during the time of the “National Park take-over,” and that he felt that “the three State Parks within that National Park boundary were run much more efficiently… and [were] more in touch with the community of northern California.” Travis was also with the Parks during this time, and he said they “balked at” the idea of the National Parks running the three Redwood State Parks. Similarly, Jonathan noted that many of the locals have a more “antagonistic attitude about the National Park,” and speculated that this might be because of the control they’ve exerted over spaces that used to be under local jurisdiction. The consensus was that State Parks, in part because of their longstanding presence in Del Norte County, have a significantly better relationship with the community than does the National Park.

Arthur, Travis, and Catherine spoke about the partnership in the most positive light. As someone working for the Parks when the partnership was getting underway, Arthur noted that one of the most important aspects of it was it “helped smooth out” some of the local antipathy towards the National Park because of the pre-existing relationship the community had with State Parks. Catherine identified more robust protections for old growth redwoods as one of the main benefits of the partnership.

More frequently than benefits, participants spoke about the challenges and frustrations they had with the partnership. Kathleen talked about her enjoyment of the
community events put on by or hosted in the Parks, but that “it seems like all the stuff happens in Humboldt County, at Prairie Creek.” Maria and Jonathan both talked about funding distribution to the northern Parks, saying that “not a lot of money funnels into [Jed Smith]” (Maria) and “the money doesn’t get distributed evenly across the Parks that are supposed to be a part of this partnership” (Jonathan). Jonathan continued by speculating that since “a lot more National Park people may be living in the northern Humboldt Bay area, they focus on Prairie Creek a lot more and the northern part of the Park gets a little less attention.”

Beyond frustrations concerning the equity of the Parks within the partnership, many people voiced how they see the institutional power of the Parks play out in their community. Multiple participants brought up Crescent Beach Overlook as an example of “a County spot, you know, and now you can't go there at sunset” because of the increased regulations brought in by the National Park (Jonathan). This is particularly challenging in a place like Del Norte, where desire for local control is high. Additionally, this combination of lack of local control and increased regulations within the Parks was a commonly cited reason for why locals avoid Jed Smith. Susan said that “there’s so many rules and regulations in California [Parks] that make it difficult to do a lot of things,” and others noted restrictions on camping spots, dogs in the Park, and gathering as examples of the kinds of regulations in the Parks that they could avoid by going elsewhere.

In combination with regulations in the Parks, the abundance of protected areas in Del Norte that afford similar opportunities for recreation and getting outside was another reason locals avoided Jed Smith. With regards to swimming in the summer, Sasha said
there are 6 million other places to use on the Smith River that don’t, they
don’t have bathrooms, they don’t have all the amenities, it’s a little harder
to drive into them, that kinda thing, but if you're prepared for that stuff
then you don’t necessarily need Jed Smith.

Jonathan speculated that locals have

more connection to the national forest than the Park because [the Smith
River] is really special too, and swimming in the river is an activity that
seems to be more popular than walking the redwoods for locals.

Lastly, many campers noted that camping in the national forest is a more attractive option
than in the Jed Smith campground, both because of fewer regulations and because of a
perception that Jed Smith is more for tourists and visitors than it is for locals.

Many people talked about how Jed Smith is a unique park, including its adjacency
to development, the idea that it isn’t a destination park, and the limited number of trails in
the Park itself. Development in or near the Park was identified by participants as
something that diminishes the feeling that Del Norte is a place of little human impact, for
example with Sasha and Jonathan talking about houses in Hiouchi along the Smith River.

The idea that Jed Smith and the larger RNSP is not a destination park was
mentioned by Travis, Arthur, and Jonathan. Arthur said that “RNSP…isn’t a tourist
destination, it’s a stopover,” and speculated that the lack of long-term stay amenities in
Crescent City and the other towns near the southern units in the park are the biggest
contributor to this feeling. Jonathan agreed that “Redwood National Park is a place that
you drive through” rather than drive to, but suggested that development near Jed Smith
was the reason people didn’t see it as a “destination park.” He continued that Prairie
Creek feels much more like this kind of destination park because of the Newton B. Drury
Scenic Parkway and Highway 101 split that allows the park more of a secluded feel.
Though she didn’t mention this as a reason Jed Smith wasn’t a destination park, Catherine described how “you really can't travel and see the whole Park” because of the limited number of trails available, and that instead you are frequently required to “view [it] from the outside.”

The last important topic to many participants was the importance and impact of Jed Smith to/on the community. All ten participants agreed that Jed Smith is a part of the Del Norte community. Common impacts identified included opportunities to engage in/with the Park, conflict and resentment, and the importance of the community-Park relationship. Reasons participants viewed Jed Smith as important to the community included cultural expression and the Park as the economic driver of Del Norte County.

Sasha and Travis both mentioned Jammin’ at Jed, a former community event hosted by the Park, as an important opportunity for the community to gather and engage in the Park. Unfortunately, the Park had to move the event to Rowdy Creek because of concerns over the impact of noise on Marbled Murrelets, and Sasha lamented the loss of this community event as an opportunity to spend time in the Park. She continued that she is confused by the fact that the Park has not created another equivalent community event to fill in the gap in community-Park engagement, and that this is something she would appreciate seeing more of in the future.

About half of the participants agreed that Park engagement with the community is something they would like to see more of in the future, and nearly all noted the importance of having a positive relationship between the Del Norte community and Jed Smith. Though she qualified her assertion by saying she was unaware of how the Park
communicated with the community at large, Maria noted that her perception was that the park didn’t “engage too much with the community.” As someone who worked in the Parks, Travis commented that “the community does get invited” to events or interpretive programs in Jed Smith, but he didn’t “think they take advantage of it.” He continued that it isn’t necessarily the community’s fault for not taking advantage of these opportunities, and that the “Parks could do more to integrate the community with the Park” by

getting the word out and getting them up there, and maybe a shuttle up to a campfire program in the evening, come by and meet at the cultural center and jump in and go to the campfire program. I don’t think you’re gonna get, or nor do you maybe want a ton of people doing that, but just for appreciation.

Reducing or eliminating the barriers to engaging with the Park through providing ways to get to events, bringing the events to the community, or changing fee structures was an idea brought up by other participants as well.

Kathleen agreed that increasing opportunities for the community to engage with the Park is critical for their relationship, and suggested creating events like the monthly road closure in Prairie Creek for walkers and bikers because it “would really kind of nurture that relationship, because I see what an impact it has on community when people are so excited to go ride that once a month.” Jonathan said that a good relationship is important and would make him more excited about visiting the Park, but that it is “a tougher nut to crack.” Lastly, Arthur said that it is important that the community recognize that “the Parks are an integral part” of Del Norte “to be ready so that they don’t become another Yellowstone or Yosemite,” meaning a park that struggles with issues of increasing tourists without the resources to support them.
Half of the participants noted that Jed Smith is important to the community because of its role in protecting cultural sites and providing a space for cultural expression. Linda discussed being shown a Tolowa village site within the Park, and shared that one of the most important things to her about that visit was that after she left, “they put everything back just the way it was and covered it back up” to prevent visitors from finding or disturbing it. Jonathan also talked about the Tolowa villages within the Park, and speculated that Jed Smith may be “trying to conceal the location of certain Tolowa archeological sites” near the campground to prevent damage from visitors.

Linda, Susan, Travis, and Sasha all talked about the importance of Jed Smith in providing a space for Tolowa dances. Susan has been involved in planning the dances, and said

we’ve danced there over 25 years now…and we thoroughly enjoy it because we dance for our people, for our ancestors, and there was the village there at one time that used to host dances but doesn’t anymore, none of our villages host dances anymore, so we do it wherever we get an opportunity to do it. And we always dance in honor of our ancestors because we’re able to bring some of that forward from the past and keep it moving forward.

Sasha talked about how Jed Smith is unique in Del Norte for hosting the Tolowa dances, and said that “our [city and county] parks would not have that. They might now, but someone would have to approach them, it’s not like they're going out and seeking” the opportunity to host.

Beyond Jed Smith’s importance to the community for cultural protection and expression, participants talked about the pivotal role it is and will continue to play in the county’s economy. The shift many participants described from a resource-based to
tourism-based economy was expressed with a mix of apprehension and excitement. Regardless of their own perceptions of how increasing tourism may impact their lives and the places they value, however, most participants acknowledged that Jed Smith is one of the most important tourist draws in the County. This tension between the need for tourists to support the local economy and the apprehension expressed by participants about tourists’ impacts to place meanings must be closely examined to adequately plan for the future, and will be addressed in depth in the discussion.
1.5 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this project was twofold: First, to identify how natural amenities impact Del Norte participants’ place meanings, and second, to assess how Jedediah Smith State Park factors into and/or impacts these residents’ place meanings. Three important themes were identified in the data. Environment-Landscape encompassed place meanings based in the natural world, and follows from Bricker and Kerstetter’s (2002) theme of the same name. Human-Social described meanings rooted in relationships, social interactions, and social ties, and also mirrors their research. Lastly, Recreation-Exploration emerged as a third category distinct from the previous two, and is representative of meanings drawn from experiences doing activities in the natural world. This theme is just one example in which the seemingly discrete themes of Environment-Landscape and Human-Social interact, as meanings related to recreation or exploration often contained aspects of both the human and biophysical worlds.

The majority of the discussion will be dedicated to examining interconnections among these themes, followed by a section on equity and access. I conclude with observations about the photo methods used in this project.

Theme Interconnections

While it is easy to separate the interview data into discrete categories to present them, many interconnections exist between these categories. The most important of these connections include those between sociocultural and biophysical aspects of place, escape
and isolation, and those related to looking toward the future of Del Norte. Recall that the research questions interrogate place meanings, which are concerned with why residents of Del Norte value aspects of this place or “what kind of place this is” (Stedman, 2008, p. 66).

Davenport and Anderson (2005) present these interconnections as a “web of place meanings,” displaying how the major and minor categories into which they separated their data connect with and support each other. They suggest that their data support a handful of conclusions, including that place meanings shift over time and that they are based in part on landscape characteristics (indicating that meaning isn’t exclusively socially constructed). Also noteworthy in their conclusions was the assertion that the strands of the web are just as important to understanding place meanings as the categories they connect. In the following section, I will explore the web of place meanings described by participants in this study, and specifically focus on a handful of the most robust strands of the web.

Socio-cultural and biophysical aspects of place

The methodology for this research was derived in large part from Beckley et al. and in their study of place attachment in four rural Canadian communities, where they explored how residents of these towns distinguished their place attachments into biophysical or sociocultural factors, and “whether all place attachments are irreducible to such categorization” (2007, p. 926). They found that some attachments could be clearly delineated into one category, but many involved complex interactions between the two and could not be reduced without losing nuanced information about the attachment. They
assert that their finding of mixed attachments supports the idea that sense of place is also complex, and arises from interactions with both the biophysical and sociocultural aspects of a place. In this research, it is significant to note that although participants were told that the primary focus was on natural amenities, all of them incorporated elements of socio- and human-centric meanings into both their photos and interviews. This alone supports the assertion that from Beckley et al. about the complex construction of place meaning and the irreducibility of those meanings into discrete categories.

Looking to the categories in this research, the themes of Environment-Landscape and Human-Social map fairly well on to Beckley and others’ categories of biophysical and sociocultural, respectively. While Recreation-Exploration inherently displayed connections between these two other themes, it will not be the focus of this section. In examining the content in each of these three themes, it becomes apparent that a clean delineation between them is simply not possible, and that the ambiguity in where to sort the data is where some of the richest information can come from.

In the Environment-Landscape theme, many of the subthemes inherently involve people in some way. For instance, concerns about meaningful places being negatively altered by people were frequently brought up by participants. The meaning of Stout Grove as a place of reverence and tranquility described by Travis is one such example, where increasing tourism is impacting how he perceives that place. Environmental health was another common meaning participants described about Del Norte, particularly in reference to the Smith River, and Maria laid out the negative impacts of the lily bulb industry on the health of the river. In both cases, the meanings found in the natural
environment cannot be isolated from, nor are they immune from, the influence of people and society.

Perhaps the best example of this kind of crosstalk between meanings rooted in the natural world and meanings rooted in interactions with people or society came from Susan and the picture she took of Wilson Creek (Figure 13, in results). Upon looking at this picture of the creek, beach, driftwood, and plants emerging out of the background fog, it seems to depict nothing about people, relationships, or community. However, the meanings captured and described by Susan were about both, in nearly equal measure. She described the fond memories she had of going there as a child to smelt fish and gather plants, but these memories were also directed at “the comradery, the friendship, [and] all the people you knew who are no longer with us.” While the purpose of her and others being there was to access resources for sustenance, the most meaningful aspects of this place for Susan were based in the community and relationships she experienced there.

Within the Human-Social theme, numerous meanings focused on interactions with people or the community related back to meanings found in the environment, either directly or indirectly. The most frequent of these connections can be observed in the subtheme Educate and Learn, in which many participants discussed teaching others or learning from others about meanings they or others found in the environment. The Del Norte community also seemed to come together the most around discussions of what to do in or for their natural spaces, with examples including the community input regarding how to manage Beachfront Park and Redwoods Rising. Finally, personal experiences with family and friends were important generators of meaning for many participants, and
many of these meanings are directed at both the personal relationships as well as the places in which they were formed.

A common way in which participants discussed education was when they acted as tour guides for visiting friends and family or for newcomers to the area. Arthur talked specifically about being able to tell people about the importance of the Parks and the importance of the National-State partnership in carrying out its mission. Travis described sharing the felt sense he got while in the redwood forest, and in Stout Grove specifically, and how he enjoyed sharing with people the “sense of wonder and appreciation” he feels while there. Jonathan described bringing people to Mill Creek on bike tours, and using the water as a backdrop for talking about the importance of that habitat for Coho salmon. In all three cases, the participants discussed education in a way that was a reflection of the meanings they recognized in the natural world.

Place meanings rooted in close relationships with family and friends were common among participants, and while a handful of meanings could be isolated from the natural environment, many were based in the experiences participants had in those places. Kathleen and Susan both took multiple pictures that exemplified this. About a close-up picture Kathleen took of her and her daughter, she described how it represented the quality time they are able to spend together in the outdoors. She also discussed a particular rock on the Smith River within Jed Smith that she and her daughter visit to feel connected to her mother. Susan similarly described places around Del Norte, including Crescent Beach Overlook and a section of Highway 199 that used to have a roadside water fountain, that remind her of the times she spent with her family.
Multiple research endeavors have similarly noted the complexity of place attachment or place meanings. Amsden and others conducted a photo-elicitation study about place attachment in Seward, Alaska, and describe how residents’ sense of place and community was “constructed around an amalgamation of the state’s remoteness, community interactions, recreation opportunities, and social relationships” (2010, p. 49). Similar in a variety of ways Crescent City, Seward is a relatively isolated town on the southern coast of Alaska, is considered a gateway community to the nearby Kenai Fjords National Park and Chugach National Forest, and has a tourism industry that plays an important role in the local economy. The authors conclude that for Seward residents, “‘social landscapes’ have local natural resources at their core,” and both this and the reverse, that natural-resource-based meanings have social landscapes at their core, seem to also be true for residents of Del Norte (2010, p. 49).

There are two other important conclusions that can be drawn from the interactions and connections between themes, like biophysical and sociocultural, that seem isolated from each other. First, it pushes back against the idea that place meanings or sense of place is entirely socially constructed or entirely based in biophysical features of a place. Tuan, Relph, and other early scholars of place asserted that the distinction between “undifferentiated space” and meaningful place lies in individual and communal experience with it (Tuan, 1977, p. 6). Following from their ideas that experience in space leads to the endowment of meaning and value, a cadre of “social construction” place literature has emerged, and is centered on the assumption that “sense of place is not intrinsic to the physical setting itself, but resides in human interpretations of that setting.”
Sampson and Goodrich contest this notion in their study of community formation through sense of place on the isolated West Coast of New Zealand (2009). They note the importance of both the “physical and phenomenological” aspects of place, and suggest that “the essence of place is expressed and constrained through the effects of the physical world” (2009, p. 912). Stedman also refutes a unidimensional construction of place meanings, and argues that if there is no basis for place meanings in the physical environment, “there is a wide latitude in which environmental degradation may occur” while leaving place meanings intact (2003, p. 682). Participants in this study clearly demonstrated that the physical landscape plays a large role in their construction of meaning, as many noted how degradation from off-road vehicles, trash, new infrastructure, or pollution has disrupted or impinged upon their place meanings. This study’s findings support these scholars’ claims, and enrich the existing body of knowledge about the role of the physical setting and the interconnections it has with social interaction in the creation of place meanings, or as Stedman asserts, “landscape characteristics matter” (2003, p. 682).

Second, and following from the conclusion that place meanings are both socially constructed and based in the physical attributes of a place, place meanings change over time and are inherently tied to landscape change. Participants noted how their attachment to and meanings of places changed the longer they lived in Del Norte. This is particularly true of Jed Smith, where nearly everyone described it as a place for newcomers and tourists, whereas locals described a greater attachment to other protected areas like the Siskiyou Wilderness. Their place meanings in Jed Smith were not necessarily diminished
over time, as many described meaningful places in the Park they will still visit, but the relative importance of Jed Smith place meanings compared to other natural places in Del Norte did shift. For Arthur in particular, the meanings of exploration in Del Norte have changed drastically over his time here, to the point that he is ready to leave and find a new place to live and explore.

These findings support the growing cadre of literature that suggests place meanings are multidimensional constructs, and are not formed exclusively through social interaction, experience in the physical environment, or because of innate biological qualities (Stedman, 2003). They also contribute to conclusions drawn by other scholars that place meanings are mutable, and can change over time or with landscape change (Davenport & Anderson, 2005). The latter finding in particular has important implications for managers of protected areas, as well as other institutional bodies that have jurisdiction over meaningful places (e.g. City Councils, County Boards of Supervisors), as place meanings can “shape attitudes toward and potential behaviors in the context of…planning and management” (Davenport & Anderson, 2005, p. 638).

Escape and isolation

The ability to find solitude through escape in Del Norte was discussed by most participants, and was expressed across the three major themes as the positive aspects of being alone. On the other side of the coin, isolation was also brought up by many people as well, and was used to connote the negative aspects of this sense of aloneness.

In their study on place meanings for Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Wynveen and others (2012) identified ‘escape from the everyday’ as a prevailing place meaning...
held by tourists, residents, and other stakeholders, particularly as it pertained to finding solitude while recreating. Similarly, recreating to escape was one of the ways in which participants described seeking out solitude in Del Norte. More generally, participants described escape as either a push or pull: escape to nature was a pull, meaning participants intentionally sought out places in the natural world for solitude, while escape from people was a push, where participants were more concerned with removing themselves from people than they were with seeking out a specific place.

An intriguing aspect of escape discussed in the results was the tension Del Norte residents described between wanting people to visit the area and wanting visitors to leave. The joy of sharing meaningful places with visitors, as well as the importance of visitors to the tourist economy, were both important factors in wanting people to come to the area, while participants’ desire for seclusion and solitude seemed to drive their feelings of wanting people to leave. A similar trend was noted by Amsden and others (2010), where Seward locals took pictures of and talked about how places they enjoy were being intruded upon by out-of-towners. The authors go on to note that while this is a serious problem for locals, tourists are increasingly important to the town’s economy. In Del Norte, the dual view of visitors expressed by many participants may be representative of the tension between place meanings based on solitude and the recognition that Del Norte is a desirable place to visit or move to, and that its economy is increasingly structured around supporting tourists that inherently disrupt the solitude valued by locals.

Place meanings of escape and solitude were reflected in other themes as well, for example, Del Norte is a place of little human impact. Davenport and Anderson noted that
participants in their study described similar meanings, for instance a loss of “rural character” due to increasing development along the Niobrara National Scenic River in rural Nebraska (2005, p. 636). The meanings expressed about these little-to-no-impact areas suggest that residents value them beyond the utility they may provide to escape, and that they also recognize their intrinsic value.

In contrast to escape-based meanings, isolation was frequently, though not exclusively, used to describe the more negative aspects of solitude and seclusion. This isolation was felt on multiple scales, from the individual up to the community. For example, Sasha discussed a survey she conducted that found locals struggled with sadness and depression stemming from perceived isolation, demonstrating the effects of isolation on individuals. Many participants described how Crescent City is notably isolated by road from other places, demonstrating the effects of isolation on the community as a whole. While isolation was used to connote the challenges of seclusion, it was also perceived as a positive aspect of this place by some participants. For instance, Maria noted that Del Norte has the resources to survive on its own if it was cut off from the rest of California and Oregon. Also, isolation from other places is likely an important contributing factor to meanings of escape, which require places with few people or built structures.

Other studies have sought to better understand place meanings in rural or isolated communities, with mixed results regarding how the isolation in those places is perceived. In research based on the West Coast of New Zealand, Coasters (locals) “rarely discussed the notion of being isolated in negative terms” (Sampson & Goodrich, 2009, p. 911).
Similar to some Del Norte locals, they noted that the isolation they experienced from being sandwiched between the ocean (Tasman Sea or Pacific Ocean) and the heavily forested mountains (Southern Alps or Siskiyou Mountains) encouraged a kind of resourcefulness that many in the community valued. However, participants in Del Norte noted both strong positive and negative connotations for isolation, setting them apart from the study in New Zealand. Amsden and others also found a similar trend in Seward, Alaska, where some residents “greatly valued the ample freedom, isolation, and anonymity” they had in their community (2010, p. 49).

From this and other studies concerning rural towns, which often act as gateway communities to nearby protected areas, place meanings based on escape and isolation are clearly multifaceted and not easily categorized into positive or negative aspects of place. The tension described by residents in these towns between a desire to remain secluded or retain their rural character, and the desire and need for visitors to come and enjoy those same solitary places, is an example of the nuance contained within these meanings. A desire for local control over local spaces was expressed by residents of Del Norte, as well as by locals in the rural towns of the other studies, and is perhaps an important contributor to why visitors may be seen as intrusive. The insider knowledge about special places can be impinged upon as more people visit, and “as these hidden places are discovered, the secrets known only to community insiders are threatened” (Amsden et al., 2010, p. 40).
Future change and adaptation

This study confirmed that place meanings have the potential to change over time (Davenport & Anderson, 2005; Stedman, 2003). Place meaning change can be either positive (e.g. gaining greater appreciation for a local river) or negative (e.g. loss of local control), and can be influenced by natural or social changes to place. The dual conclusions regarding the multidimensional construction of place-based meanings, and the mutability of these meanings in response to the passage of time and landscape change, are important in examining the concerns and apprehensions for the future described by Del Norte residents.

One of the most common concerns for the future among participants was the perception that resident and tourist populations will continue to increase over the coming years. A handful of participants accentuated this point by highlighting that Del Norte’s temperate climate will become more appealing to people as the climate continues to warm and fires continue to break out in other areas of California. This concern of increasing population is of particular importance because of the tension between preserving place meanings based on isolation and escape, and the increasing importance of tourists and permanent residents to the Del Norte economy. As Susan so succinctly put it when it came to this tension: “I love to have visitors, but you can all go home.”

Critical to addressing the concerns voiced by residents of Del Norte is planning for how the area will adapt to these perceived changes. A mix of frustration and appreciation was expressed by participants toward the way these planning decisions are made about public spaces in Del Norte. Participants described a variety of specific
instances in which multiple community groups and stakeholders were meaningfully involved in the decision-making process, including the Redwoods Rising project and Beachfront Park planning. This is reflective of the shift noted by multiple scholars of protected areas increasingly involving local communities and moving away from park-as-island approaches to management (Lee et al., 2018).

The frustration residents had about planning decisions was expressed mostly at a smaller scale and in more abstract terms. Some participants noted specific decisions made by RNSP they found irksome, such as the decision to close Crescent Beach Overlook at sunset, but many only articulated a sense of disconnect between the Parks and the community. A few specific examples of this disconnect included the decline of public events in Jed Smith like Jammin’ at Jed, or the priority of public events in units of RNSP south of Del Norte County. More often, though, participants described a general lack of connection or engagement between the Park and the community. Strengthening this relationship will be critical in planning for the future in Jed Smith and in Del Norte, and realizing the existence and importance of this relationship will help the area “to be ready so that [Jed Smith] doesn’t become another Yellowstone or Yosemite” (Arthur).

Despite the overall perception that the Jed Smith-community relationship needs improvement, some participants suggested that it is already moving in the right direction. Travis described multiple examples of the Park making efforts to engage with the community through interpretive programs, and Kathleen and Arthur noted that the Park and the community are both beginning to realize their mutual importance to each other.
Perhaps the most important conclusion for both community members and
decision-makers is that identifying and understanding place meanings can contribute to
discussions about how to plan for the future. Farnum and colleagues proffer a similar
conclusion, that understanding both the spectrum and complexity of place meanings can
provide a framework for “managers to work together with the community to identify and
protect” significant places (2005, p. 41). The diversity and nuance of place meanings
expressed by participants in this research suggests that there may be an equally diverse
collection of ways to adapt to the future. Additionally, the issues presented by preserving
special places into the future are not simply about being for or against this preservation,
and the nature of the preservation could have significant implications for its reception by
the community. Place meanings are well situated for answering the question of *why*
people value certain places, and has an important role to play in planning for the future.

Power and Access

Multiple scholars have noted that place-making is a power-imbued act, which can
be implicated in the “creation and maintenance of ideological beliefs” (Cresswell, 1996,
p. 150), and can be “discursively manipulated towards desired…ends” (Stokowski, 2002,
p. 374). Though not a central aspect of this research, a brief discussion concerning the
construction of places and the power that it carries is necessary to situate participants’
place meanings in the broader sociopolitical landscape. I will frame the discussion of
power and place using the Theory of Access developed by Ribot and Peluso (2003), and
will focus primarily on participant comments about access to places of sustenance and the rights and responsibilities that come with accessing these places.

In their Theory of Access, Ribot and Peluso broaden the definition of access from the *right* to benefit from things to “the *ability* to benefit from things – including material objects, persons, institutions, and symbols” (2003, p. 153, emphasis added). They note how the commonly held rights-based approach does not adequately interrogate the material difference in level of access people experience despite perhaps having equal rights of access. By focusing on ability, the broad range of interactions which can curtail or enable a person’s access can be better understood. The authors also disrupt property’s notion of a “bundle of rights,” and instead suggest that considering the ability to access places or resources “is more akin to ‘a bundle of powers’” (2003, p. 153). They describe how these powers manifest through a variety of mechanisms through which access is gained or maintained.

In this research, concerns about adequate access brought up by participants can generally be grouped into two categories – access to local spots (like Crescent Beach Overlook), and access to culturally significant spots (e.g. for sustenance activities, connecting to the past, or spiritual purposes). In both instances, the ability for local people to define what access to these places looks like was also an important factor. Most commonly, the entity seen as limiting local peoples’ ability to access these places was the Parks. In the context of Ribot and Peluso’s definition of access, participants were suggesting that their *ability* to benefit from access to these places is shaped by decisions made by the Parks that affect patterns of access. Looking at the *right* to benefit from
these places is, as Ribot and Peluso suggest, too narrow a view, because American National and State Parks openly declare their public ownership and the right of all to visit these places.

Susan and Linda both discussed how access to gathering spots within Jed Smith has become almost nonexistent. Susan specifically discerned that she is not talking about “accessibility to go look at the redwood tree that grows here versus the redwood tree that grows there, I’m talking about surviving.” One of the mechanisms through which access to places is shaped is access to knowledge. Ribot and Peluso note that some of the power within this mechanism lies in the ability to shape the discourse around resource access, for instance, “‘scientific’ narratives linking human activities to ecological changes often serve to justify state control over resources” (2003, p. 169). In the case of access to gathering spots within Jed Smith, regulations have been put into place by the Parks to prevent people from damaging the resources the Parks are there to protect (Redwood National and State Parks, 2019). While these regulations still allow for gathering of certain resources within the Park, there are limits placed on what and how much can be gathered (e.g. ten gallons per person per day of Tanoak acorns). There is also language indicating that given “significant changes in visitor use patterns or measurable adverse effects to park resources,” the Park retains the authority to alter gathering limits or to revoke the right to gather entirely (Redwood National and State Parks, 2019, p. 8). Beyond gathering, certain permits and authorizations are required for hunting and fishing, which can represent additional barriers to access on top of established regulations. The control over these sustenance activities by the Park is implicitly predicated on the
assumption that they could become destructive to Park resources if left unchecked. Linda noted that this is likely due to a misunderstanding about what gathering actually is, which she described as inherently non-destructive. The idea of ‘contested natures’ is relevant here as well, where the social and institutional power of the Parks gives them the ability to shape the discourse around potentially destructive activities in order to enforce a particular normative-order-in-nature (Macnaghten, 1998).

The comments made by Susan and Linda about rights and responsibilities are also relevant in discussing how the kinds of discourse present in Jed Smith shape the access that people experience. Both described that the rights to access a place need to be intimately linked to the responsibilities you have to that place. Ribot and Peluso suggest that discourse can create universalizing categories, like that of the ‘global commons,’ and that this can normalize the implementation of equally universalizing regulations in these places “in the name of environmental protection” (2003, p. 169). In the case of access for gathering, a universal restriction on activities of this type acts in two important ways. First, it obscures the differences between, for instance, gathering or hunting for sustenance and sport hunting or collecting plants as a hobby, and instead suggests that all of these activities have similar negative impacts on the environment. Second, it does not address systemic injustice arising from the forced removal of Indigenous people from their territory.

This is merely one example from this research in which the act of place making can be shown to be an act of asserting one ordering of the world over another. By situating the act of place making within the framework of access presented by Ribot and
Peluso, we can also see that examining the right to benefit from places or resources is a more limited view than the ability to benefit from places or resources. The ability of people to benefit from places or resources can be enabled or circumscribed by a variety of factors, including through the discourse operationalized around that place or resource. By interrogating access, there is a “focus on the issues of who does (and who does not) get to use what, in what ways, and when (that is, in what circumstances)” (Neale, 1998, p. 48). Research concerning place or place meanings that addresses these questions is better situated to uncover the implications of power in defining place and how this impacts levels of access and equity.

Experience with Photo Methods

While this research project did not specifically endeavor to investigate the efficacy of photo methods in understanding residents’ sense of place, I nonetheless uncovered interesting lessons for future researchers. The photo methods used here most closely align with photo elicitation, where interview data is considered primary while the photos themselves are secondary, and where the focus is on the individual rather than on groups or communities of people. In this section, I describe photo elicitation and its efficacy in place research, the logistical successes and shortcomings of this method, and considerations for what additional types of data may emerge from photo elicitation interviews (PEI).

One of the most important factors of photo elicitation that distinguishes it from other photo methods is its prioritization of verbal over visual data. The photos used in
PEIs have been long considered to allow for the emergence of meanings that may be invisible to the interviewer, or that may be latent in the photographer’s memory (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; Harper, 2002). I found, similarly, that photo elicitation was powerful in terms of the stories and memories it inspired. Susan’s photo of Wilson Creek (Figure 13) again exemplifies the importance of verbal data: the photo itself only depicts biophysical features around the creek, but her description of it was primarily about the sociocultural aspects of that place.

With regard to place research, photos allow the participant to document the particularities about places they find meaningful, and allow the research to be “placed’ in ways not easily captured in survey research” or using only interview data (Stedman et al., 2004, p. 586). Given the multifaceted and mutable nature of place meanings, photos are effective in eliciting these multilayered meanings and offer participants a way to frame their comments that interview-alone research does not provide in the same measure. This research broadly supports conclusions drawn in the literature about the efficacy of photo elicitation as a qualitative research method, and adds to the body of knowledge about its potentially undervalued importance in researching sense of place and place meaning.

Turning toward the logistical benefits and constraints of this method, one of the most common topics brought up by participants was the decision to use disposable film cameras as opposed to allowing them to choose their own technology. While using disposable cameras has a number of benefits, most notably the ability to equitably standardize the photography process among participants, it does come with challenges.
Upon first seeing their photos during the interview, many participants noted the poor quality of some of their photos, particularly when it came to lighting. Nearly all photos that were taken indoors, as well as those taken with differently lit subjects (e.g. the bright Smith River through shadowy trees), were difficult to make out, and some were unusable in the interview. This may have led to an additional constraint, that participants more often chose to omit these low-quality photos regardless of what they depicted. Another challenge of disposable cameras is the potential to waste shots by taking pictures accidentally. Fortunately, this only happened a handful of times, and no participant mentioned it as detracting from their experience with the method. Future researchers should keep in mind these logistical considerations when deciding on the way in which they deploy photo methods.

Though photo methods have been an established research method since the late 1950s, there is always room to learn more about how they act as a tool in the research process (Collier, 1957). During the course of interviews, I discovered a second type of visual data can be obtained from PEIs. I asked participants to choose a selection of their 26 total photos that they wanted to discuss in depth, and then asked them to arrange this selection in any way they saw fit. This organization varied widely between participants, with some choosing to organize photos geographically, some temporally, some by category or group, and some in the order they were taken (Figure 27). While this novel type of visual data was not specifically used in this project, I believe it warrants further study to understand how it may add nuance or complexity to the verbal and visual data already gathered in PEIs.
Figure 27: Four examples of how participants organized their photos for discussion. A) Susan arranged her photos geographically according to “our [Xus] traditional or indigenous boundaries that we lived within.” Photo one is the southern boundary near Wilson Creek, and photo 7 is at Endert’s Beach Lookout. B) Maria organized her photos into categories, including things that brought her or keep her in Del Norte, things that make it challenging to live there, and things in the area that she sees as progressing forward. C) Linda organized her photos in clusters rather than on a grid, and was the only participant to do so. D) Arthur organized his photos in “the order of [his] life.”
This research adds to and largely affirms findings of existing studies that employ photo methods to investigate place meanings. The results of this study suggest that place meanings are indeed complex and multifaceted constructs, that they are mutable in the face of change, and that photo methods are well placed to elicit the nuance and complexity that these place meanings comprise. These findings support the conceptualization in place literature that place meanings are in part created through social interaction, but pushes back against asserting that this is the only mechanism through which meanings arise. In addition to social factors, these results support the broadening of our thinking about the origins of place meanings to include aspects of the physical environment, as suggested by scholars such as Stedman and Cresswell. With regards to photo methods, it also suggests that there may be more types of data offered through PEI than have been considered previously.

In the context of this specific research, there still exists a need for further investigation about how the community of Del Norte perceives place meanings of other members in their community, how they are negotiated, and what the community views as the most important meanings for the area. This study was limited by the number of participants and a focus on individual meanings, and future studies could build upon these initial findings by employing methods that allow them to gather a greater amount of data or investigate community level meanings and meaning construction.
An important facet of Del Norte County not given significant weight in this study is the presence of Pelican Bay State Prison just north of Crescent City. This omission is not to suggest the prison is irrelevant to the conversation of place meanings in Del Norte. On the contrary, the idea of protected areas as places to be preserved can only exist alongside the idea that other places, such as prisons, are disposable. The rather unique juxtaposition in Del Norte of land-to-be-protected proximate to land-to-be-sacrificed merits further investigation as to how these distinct definitions of place contribute to residents’ place meanings.

The power and contested nature of place meanings can be cause for conflict and growth, both within communities and in the relationships between communities and institutions that reside there. This is particularly important given the changing nature of place meanings, and the perception that Del Norte is on the cusp of significant changes. Beyond Del Norte County, many other rural communities in the western United States have already, are in process of, or will soon be experiencing changes to their economies, demographic structure, or local land management strategies. Through better understanding place meanings, land managers, community leaders, and other stakeholders will be in a better position to adapt to these changes.
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Appendix A: Photography Guide

The purpose of this research is to investigate the role of natural places, resources, and amenities in attaching residents of the Crescent City area to their local community. The goal of this research is to open a dialogue within the community about how residents’ sense of place is impacted by these natural amenities. By a sense of place, I mean the collection of meanings, attachments, values, and feelings you have related to this place. I’m particularly interested in the role Jedediah Smith State Park plays in residents’ sense of place.

For participants in this research, the first step involves going out into the parks, your community, and/or other significant places to take pictures, which we will discuss in depth during an interview. You are not constrained to only taking pictures in Crescent City or the Parks, but do try to only take pictures within Del Norte County. Below is a set of prompts for what you should think about when taking pictures, as well as a detailed list of instructions. The picture-taking phase should take 2-3 hours.

**Prompts**

Take original photographs of people, places, and things that…

- Most attach you to your community OR most detach you from your community;
- Mean the most to you OR negatively impact the people/places/things that mean the most to you;
- You would miss the most about the community/area/place if you were to move away OR things about the community/area/place that might compel you to move away.

Your goal is to document the things about this area that are important, special, meaningful, or valuable to you. Consider how the Redwood Parks and other natural areas positively or negatively factor into your perception of this place.

**Instructions**

1. After reviewing the consent form and indicating your understanding, you will receive your materials from Erik.
   a. With your disposable camera, capture 27 photographs that reflect the above prompts. The first picture you take should be of your face or name so I can identify your photos. This picture will not be used beyond identification of your photos.
b. Please try to finish taking pictures within 14 days.

c. You and Erik will exchange contact information for follow up during the photography process and to schedule an interview

2. Once the photographs have been taken, drop off your camera in the provided bag at the Newton B. Drury Center (Crescent City Information Center), located at 1111 2nd St, Crescent City. Please notify Erik after dropping off your camera.

3. After the photographs are developed, you will be invited to attend an interview at a place of your choosing to discuss your photographs. The interview will take 1-2 hours.

4. Reminders and recommendations:
   a. Consider making a list of places and things you want to take pictures of. Making a list is entirely voluntary and I will not be collecting your list if you make one. However, it may be helpful to make sure you don’t accidentally use up your limited number of pictures on only one subject.
   b. In addition to making a list before taking pictures, it may also be useful to take notes on what you are taking pictures of if you think you might forget. Again, this is for your reference only and is not required.
   c. Be creative with the pictures you take! Don’t feel constrained by the time of year, accessibility, or the challenge of photographing things like sounds and smells.
   d. If you want to use pictures of your own for hard-to-access or no-longer-in-existence places, you will be allowed to. Please talk with Erik if you want to substitute your own pictures.
   e. Please don’t take identifiable pictures of people without their explicit consent
   f. Do not put yourself at risk to take a photo

**Important Contact Information**

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Appendix B: Interview Guide

Background and Demographics (10-20 minutes)

• How long have you lived in this area?
• What do you do?
  o What do you enjoy doing in your free time?
• How else would you identify yourself?
  o Is there anything else you’d like me to know about yourself?

Take a moment to look at pictures and choose 5-10 to discuss

• Why did you choose this set of photos?

Photo Discussion (45-60 minutes)

IDENTIFY EACH PHOTO BEFORE DISCUSSING; TAKE PICTURE OF LAYOUT

• Why did you take this picture?
• Why is X meaningful or valuable to you?
• What is in this picture? Where did you take this photo?
• What do you see here?
• What were you trying to capture?
• How does this photo capture your relationship with or attachment to this place?
  o How does X make you want to stay in/leave this place?
• How has X impacted you?

Sense of Place and Jed Smith (20-30 minutes)

• Observations:
  o I noticed you didn’t include any pics of JS in your set, or take any at all. Tell me about why that is.
  o I noticed that many or all of your pictures come from JS. Talk about why that is.
    ▪ What do you value about JS specifically?
    ▪ Are other natural spaces significant to you in this area?
  o I noticed you took pictures in JS but didn’t bring up the park in our discussion. Why?
• I’m interested in your relationship with Jed Smith SP
  o Can you describe your relationship to the park?
    ▪ Do you visit? If so how often?
    ▪ Do you consider the park part of the/your community? Why?
    ▪ Do you feel welcomed and/or included by the park?
  o How has your relationship with the park changed over the years?
• Is there anything we didn’t cover that you want to bring up or discuss?

End Products of Research (5-10 minutes)

• I am considering different ways to communicate my research findings with the community.
  o How would you like me to communicate findings?
    ▪ To whom?
  o Of the things we discussed, what would you hope to share with others in this community?
  o Would you be interested in attending or participating in the delivery of findings in any way?