SENSE OF PLACE: A CASE STUDY OF THE BUCKEYE FOREST COUNCIL

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Science

Maeve S. Redmond Mason
March 2006
This thesis entitled
SENSE OF PLACE: A CASE STUDY OF THE BUCKEYE FOREST COUNCIL

by
MAEVE S. REDMOND MASON

has been approved for
the Program of Environmental Studies
and the College of Arts and Sciences by

Nancy Manring
Associate Professor of Political Science

Benjamin M. Ogles
Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
For many of us, place is an important part of who we are. This research examines the significance that a sense of place can have on our lives. To date, most of the research on this subject examines how individuals experience place. This research expands on the current literature surrounding a sense of place by examining how groups define, create, and capitalize on a sense of place.

Using the qualitative research methods of content analysis and in-depth interviews, this research presents a case study analysis of how a particular nonprofit organization active in the state of Ohio creates and capitalizes on a person’s sense of place in order to achieve its mission. In discussing the campaigns and techniques currently being used by the Buckeye Forest Council, this research examines how a specific organization has attempted to both construct and capitalize on a sense of place in order to protect public lands.

Of the strategies and techniques used by the Buckeye Forest Council, several emerged as particularly effective; including the group’s quarterly newsletter, Martha’s Journal, their Timber Monitoring Program, and the annual Buckeye Gathering. Together this publication, program, and activity along with other techniques have both created and capitalized on people’s sense of place. However, future research into how groups experience and utilize a sense of place needs to examine issues related to the access and
equity of power relationships involved in resource decision-making, the use of networks and politics of scale, as well as how a group’s culture can affect their ability to effectively utilize a sense of place. As more of us find ourselves having to work together in public decision-making and as more of our public lands become at risk, the need for continued research into how groups create and capitalize on a sense of place is imperative.

Approved: Nancy Manring

Associate Professor of Political Science
Acknowledgments

In completing this research in fulfillment of my Masters of Science in Environmental Studies I would like to sincerely thank all the people who have influenced my understanding of place. To my parents, sisters, and husband, thank you for helping me understand that home is not limited to a tangible place, but rather a state of mind that you create for yourself. To my advisor and committee members, thank you for your advice and support. To the staff and members of the Buckeye Forest Council, thank you for sharing with me your experiences and own senses of place.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... 3

Acknowledgments ............................................................................................................................. 5

List of Figures ................................................................................................................................. 7

Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................................................................... 8
  1.1 A Sense of Place ...................................................................................................................... 9
  1.2 Literature Review ................................................................................................................... 11
  1.3 Justification ........................................................................................................................... 25

Chapter 2: Methodology .................................................................................................................. 28

Chapter 3: Results .......................................................................................................................... 36
  3.1 A Sense of Place: Socially Constructed Interactions ................................................................. 40
  3.2 Tactics to Protect a Sense of Place .......................................................................................... 48
  3.3 A Transitional Sense of Place: The Outback Approach ............................................................ 51
  3.4 A Place for Networks .............................................................................................................. 55
  3.5 A Place for Connections: Empowering Citizens ................................................................... 66
  3.6 A Place of Importance: Dysart Woods .................................................................................... 74

Chapter 4: Conclusions .................................................................................................................... 83

References ........................................................................................................................................ 94

Appendix A: Buckeye Forest Council Board of Directors and Staff Biographies ..................... 98

Appendix B: Interview Guide ......................................................................................................... 101

Appendix C: Sense of Place Mat .................................................................................................... 103

Appendix D: Photo Interviewing Visual Imagery Pictures ............................................................. 104
List of Figures

Figure 1: Economic Status of Appalachian Counties ........................................................39

Figure 2: Ohio State Forests and their Location ................................................................42

Figure 3: Respondent’s Account of the Physical Attributes of Place .................................44
Chapter 1: Introduction

Many individuals’ most powerful memories revolve around places - the house where they grew up, the secret places of childhood and adolescence, the setting where they first fell in love, the neighborhood where they established their first home, the dwelling where they raised their children, the summer home they built in the woods, the garden they first nurtured (Marcus, 1992, p.1).

As I entered graduate school here at Ohio University I embarked upon a journey which I hoped would lead to a better understanding of the world around me. Part of this endeavor to learn has taught me the importance of discovery and that discovery can bring about new thoughts and ideas. These thoughts and ideas have both enlightened and challenged me, and while I have grown both personally and academically, I have found myself continually drawn to a deeply ingrained concept: home. As a new resident to southeastern Ohio, and someone who moved around a lot while growing up, I have begun to appreciate how each and every place (that is distinct geographic location) that I have lived has, in its own unique way, enhanced my understanding of both myself and the world around me. “We live, act, and orient ourselves in a world that is richly and profoundly differentiated into places, yet at the same time we seem to have a meager understanding of the constitution of places and the ways in which we experience them” (Relph, 1976, p. 6). Thus, this research will examine how a sense of place is constructed and used by nonprofit organizations, first by examining the current literature and then applying significant findings within this literature to a particular case study.

Specifically, this case study will examine the Buckeye Forest Council (BFC) as a nonprofit organization active in southeastern Ohio that has both created and used a sense of place to achieve its organizational mission and advocacy. The BFC’s recent activities
related to preserving Dysart Woods has piqued my own interest and caused me to wonder how an organization can use a sense of place to advocate and educate. This study will examine how the BFC has incorporated and embraced a sense of place within its organization.

Natural resource organizations and agencies have begun to acknowledge and embrace the fact that land management success often hinges on the ability of multiple stakeholders to not only acknowledge each other, but also consider their role in a larger ecosystem. This realization has begun to create a shift in the way that stakeholders conceptualize their natural environment. This shift embraces that fact that nature is a socially constructed concept that is framed by experience bound to a local setting, noting that within each physical context is a sense of place that guides behavior and action (Cantrill & Senecah, 2001). This method of framing considers the personal and collective meanings that often intersect at a particular place.

1.1 A Sense of Place

This shift and method of framing acknowledges a growing field of research which attempts to draw attention to the ways in which perceptions of environmental management problems, as well as solutions, seem dependent on the way we picture ourselves in relation to our environment (Cantrill & Senecah, 2001). Low and Altman (1992) define place as a “physical space imbued with meaning” (p. 5). Sack (1992) defines places as the “fundamental means by which we make sense of the world and through which we act” (p. 1). More specifically, several place writers (Canter 1977; Relph 1976; and Sack 1992) illustrate place as the intersection of three forces; social and political processes, biophysical attributes and processes, and social and cultural
meanings. Cheng et al. (2003) describe each of these three forces as spheres more specifically…

Biophysical attributes and processes include naturally occurring and human-made physical features, and processes such as climate, nutrient flows, predator-prey relationships, and human migrations, hydrologic regimes, and the like. Social and political processes encompass various types of human interactions, from familial relations to resource users conflicts to political power plays. These also include formal and informal rules (e.g., statutes, regulations, treaties, norms) governing conduct. Social and cultural meanings are the ideas, values, and beliefs that order the world. Each provides a type of ‘information’ that allows people to define who they are and how they must behave in that place (p. 91).

A *sense of place* refers to the connections people have with the land, their perceptions of the relationship between themselves and a place, and is the construct which encompasses symbolic and emotional ties to place (Tuan, 1974). “…Luckermann understands place as complex integrations of nature and culture…which are linked by flows of people and goods to other places. A place is not just the ‘where’ of something; it is the location plus everything that occupies that location seen as an integrated and meaningful phenomenon” (Relph, 1967, p. 3). Thus, while definitions of place differ slightly among authors, most researchers agree that, “a sense of place is the perception of what is most salient in a specific location, which may be reflected in value preference or how that specific place figures in discourse” (Cantrill & Senecah, 2001, p. 187). This concept is akin to bioregionalism, described by Durbin (1996) “as a politics of place.” Embracing a sense of place means, “learning the history and culture of your corner of the planet…it meant going deeper than wilderness politics, deeper than science, in an effort to understand the spiritual essence and natural wisdom of place” (Durbin, 1996, p. 73).
1.2 Literature Review

Research into a sense of place is a relatively new field of study. Shumaker and Hankin (1984) note that “few fields of inquiry are so clearly interdisciplinary in nature” as the study of human feelings about place (p. 59). Hummon (1992) adds,

This theoretical complexity is inevitable, for the emotional bonds of people and places arise from locales that are at once ecological, built, social, and symbolic environments. Although environmental psychologists, social psychologists, and urban sociologists have been particularly involved in analyzing place attachments, architects, anthropologists, folklorists, and humanistic geographers have also contributed significantly to this rapidly expanding field of inquiry (p. 253).

Beginning in the 1970’s, researchers began to examine how a sense of place might inform individuals of their physical surroundings. Much of this early sense of place research consisted of traditionally empirical social science research, conducting more formal investigations into a sense of place. These investigations sought to define a sense of place and understand its relevance, through formal questionnaires and statistical analysis. Some of this research (Tuan, 1974 and Relph, 1976) has focused on simply defining a sense of place, while other research (Williams et al. 1992; Mitchell et al. 1993; Schroeder 2002) has tried to apply this understanding to resource management. Despite these and other differences, most research into a sense of place has consisted of two general approaches to investigation; that of physical place as well as the social construction of a sense of place.

The first approach to research focuses on a more cognitive understanding of place. This approach seeks to understand the link between how people categorize places as well as how people’s perceptions of place change as they interact with and in that
place. This approach attempts to understand how people discriminate and classify place based upon the degree of satisfaction experiences in place (Cheng et al., 2003). The second approach examines the importance of the socially constructed, symbolic meaning of a place, rather than on the place itself. This is a phenomenological approach to the study of how places have a way of claiming people. In this view, places begin to take on an iconic quality. The sense of place literature has not only generally been composed of only two perspectives but both have focused on “investigating how and why places influence individual action” (Cheng, et al., 2003, p. 91).

To be sure, nature is experienced in place and people’s experiences with that place matter. However, Stedman (2003) argues that physical place has been neglected in the empirical research and as a result sets out to delineate the importance of place. Stedman suggests, “…that the physical environment itself contributes to the sense of place through specifiable mechanisms….The local environment sets bounds and gives form to these constructions” (p. 671). Stedman argues that meaning is not inherent and that humans create this for themselves based on place satisfaction or a summary judgment of the perceived quality of a setting. Thus, a sense of place is based on human experiences and interpretations of settings.

Stedman (2003) sets out to examine these concepts through three models presented throughout the literature: Direct Effects, Meaning Mediated, and Experimental. The Direct Effects Model implies a direct relationship between landscape features and a sense of place. In other words, we are only attached to a place based on its outstanding physical features: the colors, textures, scents, and sounds we experience there. The Meaning-Mediated Model attributes meaning to environmental attributes of a place. This
model assumes that human attachment to place is based on interpretation and experiences of a particular place. For example, people are more likely to designate places having low population density as ‘wilderness’ than they are those places having higher population densities. The Experimental Model presents meaning as being constructed through behaviors enabled by certain characteristics of a setting. “People create wilderness meanings as they do certain things consistent with their notions of what one does in a wilderness area” (Stedman, 2003, p. 674). It is this model that Stedman hypothesizes might hold the most potential for explaining sense of place. Because the experimental model incorporates a use distinction, it necessarily includes how a person perceives their own interaction with a place.

To explore this notion, Stedman (2003) examines a lake-rich landscape in Vilas County Wisconsin; arguing this area “appears to be a good laboratory for examining the role of the physical environment on sense of place: It has important natural attributes (lakes) with strong symbolic meanings that may be threatened by change to the physical environment” (p. 765). Using local databases and mail surveys, Stedman seeks to determine how important this place is to residents. The survey questions focused on three characteristics of symbolic meaning: the ‘up north’ feel, the perceived social atmosphere, and ownership of land used as an experience measure. Using a multivariate analysis of these characteristics, Stedman chose shoreline development density as the ‘environmental variable’ of most significance. Realizing that shoreline development is important to place attachment, the most appropriate model for examining physical environment as it relates to a sense of place is the Meaning-Mediated Model. This model
treats “characteristics of the physical environment as the basis of meanings, which in turn affected attachment and satisfaction” (Stedman, 2003, p. 682).

Realizing that physical environments are important to constructing a sense of place is just the beginning. After all, a person's sense of place is necessarily vulnerable to change. Because the physical landscape may change over time, preferred meanings are also at risk. Stedman (2003) argues that the only way to protect these landscapes and the meanings that they hold is through active effort. Thus, to protect our sense of place, we must also protect our physical environments and maintain them in their current conditions. Schroeder (2002) explores this concept in his research which finds that “protecting and maintaining certain places in a relatively unchanged state can provide people with a sense of connection to their personal past as well as to the history and heritage of their family, community, and culture” (p. 13). Therefore, changes to our landscapes not only often present environmental risks, but can also disturb our sense of place and therefore damage our emotional ties to a particular place.

While much of the empirical research has focused on understanding how and why places influence individual action, new and emerging research has begun to transcend our early understandings of place, favoring a more holistic approach. This new and emerging research is a more interpretive investigation into place; understanding how and why place matters.

Cheng et al. (2003) argue that to fully understand the significance of place, a researcher must necessarily go beyond inert physical landscapes or social constructs and at least attempt to understand the unique ‘personality’ of each place. “Each place…embodies and gives rise to its own set of social and political processes and, as a
result, social and cultural meanings…[thus,] Meanings assigned to a place are unique to that place and do not readily transfer to other places, even if the biophysical attributes are identical” (Cheng et al., 2003, p. 99). This new place perspective is categorized using six propositions. These propositions reflect a place-based approach to interpreting behavior in natural resource policy debates. The first two of these six propositions focus on connections at the individual level of analysis. The four remaining assert linkages between places and group-level strategic behavior, indicating a fundamental shift in thought related to the study of a sense of place. These six propositions are:

1. People’s Perceptions and Evaluations of the Environment Are Expressions of Place-Based Self-Identity.
2. People Perceive and Evaluate the Environment as Different Places Rather Than an Assemblage of Individual Biophysical Attributes.
5. Groups Intentionally Manipulate the Meaning of Places Hoping to Influence the Outcomes of Natural Resource Controversies.
6. The Geographic Scale of a Place Can Change People’s Perceived Group Identifications and Therefore Influence the Outcomes of a Natural Resource Controversy.

This expanded understanding requires that researchers seek not only to define place, but to understand the dynamics of each place independently. Naturally this type of inquiry falls into the ‘interpretivist’ camp and relies on qualitative research methods to
gather, analyze, and interpret data. Extending our understanding of place in this manner will naturally allow for a more holistic understanding. Furthermore, Cheng et al. (2003) argue that only by extending this mode of inquiry can we bring to the forefront the rich, more layered meanings, “with the goal of enhancing dialogue and deliberation that may not otherwise occur in natural resource decision making” (p. 101).

Most disputes over place emerge or exist as a dynamic of power. This situation has been played in countless environmental disputes over land use and resources throughout history. Perhaps the most noteworthy and pervasive example of this came by way of the dispute over forests in the Pacific Northwest. Kathie Durbin (1996) speaks to the power dynamics involved in this dispute in her book, *Tree Huggers: Victory, Defeat & Renewal in the Northwest Ancient Forest Campaign*. While lobbyists and politicians were busy cutting deals with the timber industry, a smaller, but just as powerful movement was underway. “Rooted in environmental and utopian ideals, and nurtured by the back-to-the-land movement of the 1970s, bioregionalism was a politics of place. It flourished in remote, sparsely populated areas…” (Durbin, 1996, p. 72). However, it wouldn’t take long for residents in the remote areas to begin working together as a grassroots network of organizations aimed at protecting the forests of the northwest and getting their voices heard. In early issues of the bioregional magazine, *Siskiyou Country*, Mike Roseland began describing how grassroots organizations could together overthrow the dominant and powerful extractive industries,

The way to decrease the threat of decentralized power is by expanding the realm of centralized power – that is, by making decisions at the level of maximum participation, where those who are most affected by a decision have the most say about it…The goal is not to capture power but to
break it down to a point where it is human-scale, a level at which people can have a say or a vote about how to manage the energy, food, products and resources of the area where they live (Durbin, 1996, p. 72).

In the Pacific Northwest knowledge was power, and gaining knowledge meant getting to know the flora and fauna of your particular forest ecosystem; the geology of your watershed and it meant understanding your own sense of place.

Out of this movement came strategies to understand place; strategies like those adopted by the Audubon Society and their Adopt-a-Forest campaign which recruited volunteers to map old-growth tracts of forest as a way to monitor timber harvests. Also came the concept of local organizing along geographic boundaries, a movement that persists today. Perhaps most important, came the realization that, “If the movement hoped to reach out to new constituents, it was going to have to shed its proprietary attitude, empower people to convey their own message about saving the Earth, and get out of the way” (Durbin, 1996, p. 283). In the end this campaign did just that. Never before in American history had so many grassroots, local organizations worked together so effectively. While logging continued, success came as the response to a challenge. “The challenge, as forest activists had learned the hard way, was to build political support for these forests not only in the halls of Congress, or in the federal courthouse, but in the hearts and souls of the American people” (Durbin, 1996, p. 289).

Smith and Kurtz (2003) argue that the power dynamics related to space are often a direct result of the politics of scale. “‘Politics of scale’ refers to the ways in which social actors draw on relationships at different geographic scales to press for advantage in a given political situation” (Smith & Kurtz, 2003, p. 199). These authors apply the
importance of the politics of scale to community gardens in New York City. In 1999, 114 community gardens throughout the five boroughs of New York City were slated for redevelopment and public auction. However, as news of the auction went public, environmentalist and community activists began to mobilize against the redevelopment of these places by seeking to raise the scope of the issue beyond simply garden plots and even the city itself. By applying this dispute over land management to Kevin Cox’s (1998) theory of ‘space dependence and engagement,’ Smith and Kurtz examine the way traditionally subordinate groups like community garden owners harnessed power to overcome the strategies used by more powerful political actors.

Spaces of dependence are, “those more-or-less localized social relations which we depend on for the realization of essential interests, and for which there are no substitutes elsewhere” (Smith & Kurtz, 2003, p. 200). Thus, space dependence is defined using space-specific conditions that create material well-being. The individual community gardens in the New York City dispute are places of space dependence. Spaces of engagement are the actual, “space[s] in which the politics of securing a space of dependence unfolds” (Smith & Kurtz, 2003, p. 200). Spaces of engagement are the networks within which local actors defend places. “Thus, those who seek to defend a space of dependence ‘construct through a network of associations a space of engagement through which to achieve some mitigation’…” (Smith & Kurtz, 2003, p. 200). In the case of New York’s community gardens, space engagement consisted of the networks of neighborhood-based community gardeners, advocates, citywide clubs, and both public and private nonprofit organizations.
To deal with the space engagement networks at work, the city attempted to thwart the efforts of these groups by eliminating a key forum for public input. This was ultimately a strategic attempt by the city to effectively usurp their political power within the situation to stifle community activists. What the city did not account for in this dispute was the power that these networks had, especially in terms of a politics of scale. Separately these communities could achieve little, however by “working in local coalitions with as few as two gardens, gardeners could feel both empowered to take action on a local level and increasingly connected to the larger movement to save the auction-block gardens” (Smith & Kurtz, 2003, p. 203). However, at the same time these networks helped to redefine the power relationships at work, “…local conditions helped to redefine the space in which the struggle took place, weaving outposts together into increasingly networked coalitions and feeling the strength in numbers that organizing citywide networks presented” (Smith & Kurtz, 2003, p. 203). Thus, not only were networks created to alter the level of power advocates assumed, they also solidified the importance and uniqueness of each place.

In the end, while community garden advocates continued to frame the threatened gardens as significant to local places, they were also successful at expanding the spaces of engagement well beyond neighborhoods or communities to a struggle over the slate of 114 gardens. Garden activists were able to reconstruct the scale of the issue and as a result redefine the political struggle by transferring power from the city to community members; ultimately protecting the gardens.

That we begin to value and understand a sense of place as something we create, reproduce, capitalize on, and defend in an organization, we also begin to understand that
it is not possible to examine this construction of meaning, without paying attention to the means by which local and non-local groups can exercise political and economic control over place. “Research about power relationships in social negotiations over place is greatly needed…” (Stokowski, 2002, p. 375). This research will attempt to understand the importance of a sense of place in terms of political behavior, because as is seen in the current literature, “the collective social attachments to places are especially salient during times of relocation, upheaval, and environmental disasters” (Low & Altman, 1992, p. 6).

Furthermore, as more people begin to understand and realize how their own sense of place can and does matter, as well as the power that they have, they might begin to also realize that special places are not reserved to those places depicted in posters. Indeed, “nature plays less and less a role in lives within industrializing and urbanizing societies” (Riley, 1992, p. 23). This research will refocus what constitutes place and examine some of the ordinary landscapes - the traditionally forgotten natural places; like those found in the Midwest. “The Midwest does not often show up on posters. It is a modest, subtle, working landscape. Yet even in this country of prairies and glacial plains and wooded hills, wildness wells up everywhere, in the midst of towns, inside closed rooms, within our own bodies” (Sanders, 1997, p.162). Therefore, to discover our own sense of place, we might have to explore the world around us - our own backyards. “We will have to stay off the interstates, avoid the friendly franchises, climb out of our cars, hunt up guides who have lived heedfully in place, and we will have to walk around with eyes and ears open to the neighborhood” (Sanders, 1997, p. 21). “…contemporary information- and image-oriented society is far less dependant on place than any society that has preceded it” (Riley, 1992, p. 23). As a result, this research will also seek to
examine and promote a new awareness of how rural places, like the forest stands preserved by the BFC, provide an important sense of place for residents.

Consequently, not only place, but also players are important to constructing and, more importantly, maintaining a sense of place. Riley (1992) examines the reflexive relationship between people and place. He begins his examination into place attachment, by stating that humans interact with the landscape in three ways; “as a member of a species, not only a mammal but a humanoid; as a member of a particular culture or subculture; and as a unique individual” (p. 13). Shepard (1967) and Appleton (1975) define place attachment as a biological relationship between man and nature, with nature as either a means to survival or as an educational tool of human development. Sauer (1963), Tuan (1971), and Harris (1977) examine how culture affects a sense of place. This second interaction relates environmental determinism, claiming that cultural distinctions between human societies are a direct result of geomorphologically distinctive regions. Thus, it would stand to reason then that, “if every culture is a response to a particular landscape, we would expect cultural attitudes and attachments to bear a relationship to that landscape” (Riley, 1992, p. 16). The final distinction is based on individual attachment to place and depicts the more traditional sense of place literature. “However stringent the limits imposed by biology or culture, it is clear that the individual’s own life, body, and experiences play a major role in attachment to the landscape” (Riley, 1992, p. 17).

Despite this description of landscape attachment, Riley (1992) extends this traditional definition to include an even more interpretive definition of place which considers encounters, time, and fantasy. Riley’s expanded definition of place attachment
includes social encounters within place, granted that “often, powerful landscape memories are associated not only with good experiences but with shared good experiences” (p. 19). Even more critical, is the concept of time. “To Proust, as to Agee and McMurtry, attachment to place arises from what was experienced there…The essential attachment is not to the landscape itself, but to its memory and the relived experience” (Riley, 1992, p. 20). Finally, the third important distinction of place attachment comes from what some call the internal narrative, what Riley refers to simply as fantasy. This idea comes from the fact that external landscapes gain power as a setting of experience and symbolism. All this expansion of the definition of place attachment proves one thing; humans are inextricably linked to place.

Stokowski (2003) examines the importance of players as well in her article on the management practices of outdoor recreation, leisure, and tourism areas. Stokowski argues that despite the assumed positive value of a sense of place, critics have emerged who caution that, contrary to Stedman’s (2003) observations “places are more than simply geographic sites with definitive physical and textual characteristics - places are fluid, changeable, dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory” (p. 369).

As evidence of this we can turn to Stokowski’s (2003) research which attempts to provide five generalizations about place currently found in the literature; research is site-specific and should be treated as a case study; sense of place research typically focuses on positive values; researchers tend to define physical space by its objective, resource-based qualities; social cultural, and managerial elements of place are typically treated as predictable; and the unit of analysis for this type of research is usually focused on the individual. While these characteristics define the current research, Stokowski argues that,
“the politics of place assume dimensions that go well beyond basic managerial concerns,” rather political issues such as access and equity should also be considered. Places that were once depicted as tangible landscapes can be expanded to include ‘texts’ such as spoken words and photographs. Several studies examined by Stokowski depict a sense of place as being inextricably linked to individuals and based upon their ability and role to develop shared norms and meanings that help to create collaborative solutions.

Stokowski describes place as significant based on its ability to connect people and create community, encourage civic engagement, and frame our world by “opening dialogic space, confirming and interrogating contexts, and framing action - [all of which] are inherently political and moral acts” (p. 373).

Stokowski (2003) argues that future research into how groups define, construct, and use a sense of place is fundamental in understanding how even the most humble of places create community and collaborative learning. Gaps in the current research exist which fail to combine research across genres that explain how groups use a sense of place. Guided by these research paradigms, this research into sense of place will focus on campaigns and techniques currently being used by the BFC to both construct and capitalize on a sense of place.

While most of the sense of place literature has focused on the individual level of analysis, that is, what types of activities and experience create a sense of place for a particular individual; recently research in this field has begun to focus on the study of how a collective group or region experiences a sense of place. “The influence of place on group identity has been examined in a small but growing number of empirical studies” (Cheng et al., 2003, p. 94). Nanzer (2004) has begun the important process of defining
how a collective group of individuals can use a sense of place to legitimize the protection of an entire region. He examines the importance of sense of place as it relates to three constructs: place attachment, place dependence, and place identity. Place attachment implies not only a larger level of analysis, but also a time dimension. Place dependence is described as a particular place or region's potential for satisfying an individual's goals. Place identity is described as “specific circumstances and personal interpretations, [which] is the single most proximate contributor to sense of place” (Nanzer, 2004, p. 386).

Using these constructs, Nanzer (2004) argues that strategies appealing to sense of place can be employed to develop support for a regional issue like that of Great Lakes protection, even if the connection is purely symbolic. This research is significant to the sense of place literature because of its application to a public problem considered difficult in terms of its implications for a large population. “The strong sense of place regarding Michigan is such a phenomenon, a shared connection among the state's nine million residents [sic]” (Nanzer, 2004, p. 375). While Nanzer realizes that the entire state of Michigan is large, he also contends that “place is not limited by geographical size but rather by the perceptions and personal values that play a role in the development of sense of place” (p. 363). Thus, while most sense of place research has focused on case studies of a particular place, Nanzer acknowledges the significance that this phenomenon can have on an entire region. The result is a continual effort to reexamine a sense of place and support new ways of conceptualizing this phenomenon. By conducting an organizational study, this research will continue to expand upon the current research and provide added insight into how a sense of place is constructed by groups.
1.3 Justification

This research then is based, “on the [afore mentioned] assumption that the time is ripe for a second-stage analysis of place attachment – wherein scholars explore the diversity of its meanings as a basis for subsequent research and application to environmental design” (Low & Altman, 1992, p. 3). This ‘interpretivist,’ fresh perspective on place is precipitated by the growing trend which recognizes that the social and political processes influencing the outcomes of natural resource controversies are increasingly being played out at the local level; outside policy centers like Washington DC, state capitals, or even ballot boxes. Thus, “A place perspective-as expressed in the propositions-invites the social scientist in natural resources to turn a conceptual corner and look at natural resource politics in a different way” (Cheng et al., 2003, p. 99). Therefore, this second stage of research into a sense of place is needed not only to provide a means with which to apply what has been learned, but also to provide an opportunity to expand what is already known.

While this case study into a sense of place will enter the second stage of research presented by Cheng et al. (2003), “many scholars [continue to]…focus on the attachment of individuals to places” (Low & Altman, 1992, p. 6). This study of a sense of place will also contribute to the literature, because rather than continuing to focus on the individual level of analysis, this research will attempt to understand how organizations construct and capitalize on a sense of place. To be sure, “As nature becomes less common in the landscape, so does our individual role in structuring that landscape” (Riley, 1992, p. 22).

Realizing the gaps in the current literature and stating my intentions with regard to the organizational level of analysis does not completely disregard the importance that
individuals can and do play. Rather, this study acknowledges the two traditions within organizational theory; the institutional school that focuses on organizations and the human relations school that focuses on the individuals within an organization (Shafritz & Ott, 2001). This interpretive study seeks to expand the current sense of place research to examine how organizations can construct and capitalize on a sense of place. To be sure, a sense of place can be experienced both at the individual and organizational level of analysis. “Some argue that organizational interests can be examined independently of individuals (Thompson, 1967). However, critical analysis must address the fact that the experience of organizations is mediated through individuals” (Manring, 1998, p. 276). Thus, the primary consideration in this research is how a sense of place, while experienced by individuals within a group, is embodied in a group or organization’s mission.

Necessarily then, this research will also begin to understand how a sense of place can and does influence how place is managed and used by groups and organizations. The Buckeye Forest Council (BFC) offers a useful case in order to examine how a sense of place can direct organizational mission. The Buckeye Forest Council was chosen for this research into a sense of place because of its active role as a nonprofit organization throughout the state of Ohio. The BFC in working to protect public forested lands throughout Ohio provides a unique lens through which to examine how a sense of place can be used to invoke feelings of attachment and preservation in an area typically tied to extractive industry. Indeed this landscape was born of abundant resources uniquely juxtaposed against an aggressive economic push for extraction and progress. As a result,
the historical significance of forests in this region offers a unique example with which to examine how nonprofit organizations can protect and preserve resources for the future.
Chapter 2: Methodology

Using qualitative research methods, this study will provide an in depth look at how a sense of place can be used by a nonprofit organization. The end goal will be to identify broader theoretical findings that can inform management practices aimed at incorporating and taking advantage of a sense of place. Cheng et al. (2003) argue that conducting this type of place-based research provides more than just data for decision makers; “it also transforms the decision-making process itself by redistributing power to voices and meanings that may not otherwise be expressed” (p. 100).

The Buckeye Forest Council (BFC) is a nonprofit organization active in preserving and protecting public forest lands throughout Ohio. Its mission is to exist

...[as] a grassroots nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of Ohio's native forestlands and their inhabitants. Through education, advocacy, and organizing, we seek to instill in Ohioans a sense of personal connection to and responsibility for Ohio's native forests and to challenge the exploitation of land, wildlife and people. (Buckeye Forest Council: Home, 2005)

Their “work moves beyond traditional forest advocacy to address the interconnected problems of resource depletion and economic insecurity, and addresses the impact that these problems have on the land, wildlife, and people. [They pride themselves on taking] a holistic approach by confronting the destruction of our natural resources and by challenging the social patterns that fuel exploitation of the land” (Buckeye Forest Council: Home, 2005). BFC seeks to promote a sense of place, by “seek[ing] to instill in Ohioans a sense of personal connection to and responsibility for Ohio’s native forests…” (Buckeye Forest Council: History, 2005).
The BFC is led by a board of directors which consists of eleven members, living throughout the state of Ohio. These members are chosen annually by BFC members and are elected to two-year terms. The BFC also enlists the help of three full-time employees; Susan Heitker as Executive Coordinator, Chris Crews as Campaign Coordinator, and Jason Tockman as Development Coordinator. Appendix A provides a brief biography for each of the board members and staff.

BFC was formed and incorporated in 1993 as a response to the need for a group working across the state for protection of the forests and human communities who depend on them. The BFC’s creation developed as a result of the Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC) of Ohio State University. “SEAC – pronounced ‘seek,’ as in ‘seeking’ – is a grassroots coalition of students and youth environmental groups, working together to protect our planet and our future” (Student Environmental Action Coalition: About, 2005). SEAC itself began in 1988, when students from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill placed an advertisement in Green Peace Magazine. The advertisement sought to elicit students from around the nation, interested in forming a network of young environmentalists.

The purpose behind any SEAC organization is to provide student activists with a network to organize locally, within their individual states, and regionally. Fourteen principles guide the vision of each individual SEAC group’s structure and campaigns. Some of these principles include: fighting environmental degradation, recognizing the impact of the environment on human individuals and communities, demanding corporate responsibility, developing an activist rather than a volunteer approach, linking group issues to local, community concerns, and perhaps most importantly to empower the
grassroots through training and education. Guided by these principles, SEAC has
established themselves throughout the nation as a successful network of grassroots local
activists.

During over ten years of SEAC history, SEAC had helped
to network student environmentalists, broadening and
radicalizing individual’s perspectives to tackle the root
causes of environmental injustice, launched
national/regional/state campaigns…and trained
hundreds/thousands of life-long activists who have gone on
to serve in organizations like Buckeye Forest

The BFC campaigns include a varied, broad range of activities. Their three major
campaigns consist of activities related to preserving Dysart Woods, Ohio’s state forests,
and the Wayne National Forest. Perhaps the most contentious of the three campaigns is
Dysart Woods, a 50-acre tract of land located in Belmont County, Ohio, which represents
the last remaining remnant of mixed mesophytic deciduous forest in what was once
Southeastern Ohio's original forests. In recent years, this land has been at risk from
subsidence as a result of proposed mining adjacent to and under Dysart Woods. Their
second campaign involves an attempt to limit the clear cutting taking place on Ohio’s
state forests. The Mohican State Forest located in southern Ashland County provides a
good example. The BFC has focused their efforts here on educating the public about the
destructive practice of clear cutting currently being practiced in Mohican under what
many consider a disguised ‘Educational’ Logging Program. The final campaign
aggressively monitors the land management practices which allow logging in the Wayne
National Forest.
Environmental concerns related to public forest protection are increasingly being dealt with, throughout the nation, regions, cities, and rural landscapes of this country. Across this nation and throughout history, citizens have sought to protect their homes and environment. The BFC has approached these and other campaigns with the potential to ‘excite’ social capital and thereby incite civic engagement. They have indeed been the catalyst in several forest preservation campaigns throughout Ohio and the region, thus taking on the work necessary to educate and involve the public; whether encouraging letter-writing campaigns or tree sits. However, to what extent the BFC create and capitalized on a sense of place to achieve this mission is not yet known. Drawing on Cox’s (1998) theory of spaces of dependence and spaces of engagement, this research will examine the BFC’s strategies and campaigns to protect and preserve public lands in southeastern Ohio. As such, it will attempt to shed light on how a sense of place can be used by other nonprofit organizations to promote their own missions.

This research and analysis into how the BFC creates and utilizes a sense of place consisted of semi-structured interviews and document analysis. These interviews were conducted with BFC staff, board members, and volunteers, along with other community members and relevant experts. In the end, thirteen in-depth interviews were conducted. These semi-structured interviews used a “predefined set of questions that, when discussed during the interviews, lead to additional unplanned questions” (Community Culture and the Environment: A Guide to Understanding a Sense of Place, 2002, p. 112). These questions were used to explore how a sense of place has been created and capitalized on among members in an attempt to promote the group’s organizational mission. Help in choosing participants to interview was sought primarily from organization staff. These
interviews took place over the months of May, June, July, and August 2005 and consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. The closed ended questions were used to obtain demographic information, while the open-ended questions were used to elicit responses to questions pertaining to a sense of place. Appendix B provides an example question guide used to conduct these interviews. The questions were necessarily tailored to specific respondents, leading to varied, personal responses. While some questions pertained to all respondents, others were directed at agency staff and members of the board of directors. The latter were asked to justify and explain strategies and techniques used to construct and capitalize on a sense of place within the organization, both now and at the time of the group’s inception.

The document analysis consisted of an examination of relevant material related to the BFC. This analysis was primarily composed of materials found on and within the organization’s own website and newsletter. However, other documents were also examined and reviewed and consisted of local (Athens Messenger) and state (Columbus Dispatch) newspaper articles, campaign brochures, song lyrics, and personal publications. These documents and materials were all examined for patterns or themes, opinions, words, or phrases used to describe a sense of place within the community or organization.

In keeping with Stokowski's (2003) suggestions, this research also consisted of other forms of inquiry including pictorial representations used to define what a sense of place is to particular respondents. This inquiry consisted of two methods of analysis known as social mapping and visual preference surveys or photo-interviewing.
Social maps are tools that collect, organize, and analyze social data about a community. They illustrate different types of relationships and connections in general….Social maps illustrate issues and problems; causes and effects; relationships between organizations, institutions, and individuals; or perceptions in general (Community Culture and the Environment: A Guide to Understanding a Sense of Place, 2002, p. 146).

Likewise, visual preference surveys and photo-interviewing - a technique used to classify visual imagery, was used to capture “social, cultural, ecological, and economic features” of place.

This particular research also made use of a Social Mapping technique known as ‘Cognitive Maps.’ This mapping allowed respondents to communicate their own personal perceptions of their community and its surroundings; their sense of place. These cognitive maps are necessarily subjective and vary in terms of the particular interviewees’ perceptions, behaviors, and experiences. Because, “A cognitive map helps the assessor understand what contributes to someone’s sense of place,” each respondent was asked to reproduce their community using a writing utensil and a ‘sense of place mat’ (Community Culture and the Environment: A Guide to Understanding a Sense of Place, 2002, p. 152). After providing limited instructions and time (see Appendix C), the respondent was asked to discuss how their depiction defines their sense of place. This exercise allowed each respondent to describe how they see themselves in relation to place.

Likewise, visual methods of research can also be used to obtain information about a community, “either from the image itself or through an individual’s interpretation of or reaction to the image” (Community Culture and the Environment: A Guide to
Understanding a Sense of Place, 2002, p. 182). While there are three forms of visual methods of research, only two; visual preference surveys and photo-interviewing, were used within this research. Visual preference surveys make use of visual images to ascertain how respondents feel about a particular image. They are then asked “to rate this image on a scale (from -10 to +10, with 0 being neutral), depending on how well he or she likes or dislikes the image” (Community Culture and the Environment: A Guide to Understanding a Sense of Place, 2002, p. 183). The responses to these images provided the respondent a means with which to discuss how the conditions of a place, as well as the strategies used by advocacy groups pertaining to that place can affect a person/group’s sense of that place.

A second visual strategy of research was photo-interviewing. This method “integrates visual images with interviewing to reveal an individual’s thoughts and emotions about a particular event, place or relationship” (Community Culture and the Environment: A Guide to Understanding a Sense of Place, 2002, p. 185). The chosen conflicting visual images, consisting of a picture of a clear cut and old growth forest (Appendix D) were taken from organizational brochures and/or pictures on the BFC’s website. The end goal was to better understand how images are used by the Buckeye Forest Council in order to promote a sense of place.

This research was focused on a particular place and specific organization. It attempts to fill some of the gaps within the current literature. Perhaps more importantly, it has led to a better understanding of what strategies can be successfully used by other nonprofits to advocate for the protection of those places for which they perceive provide them with an important sense of place. As more and more natural places are being
threatened, we risk not only losing biodiversity or any number of other environmentally beneficial qualities; we also risk losing a sense of ourselves. Everyday we lose irreplaceable and unforgettable landscapes and species. Hopefully, by gaining a better understanding of how a sense of place can be used in the policy-making arena, we can begin to understand how best to go about protecting the symbolic meanings that are increasingly being threatened by changes to our natural environment.
Chapter 3: Results

The results of interviews conducted with Buckeye Forest Council members and staff presented a wealth of information related to how the BFC has been able to create and capitalize on a sense of place. And while the responses were varied, several themes emerged as relevant to understanding the BFC’s use of sense of place. These themes relate how the BFC has framed issues relevance in an attempt to highlight the unique physical attributes of southeastern Ohio by capitalizing on the community’s socially constructed concepts of place using networks to create a means of empowering residents.

The BFC has sought to frame the issue of public land preservation as inherent to a person’s sense of place. Indeed by encouraging the preservation of public lands, the BFC also seeks to conserve the socially constructed experiences and attachments to land; forever preserving a sense of place for residents and visitors alike. “Framing is the subtle selection of certain aspects of an issue to make them more important and thus to emphasize a particular cause for such an issue” (Dearing & Rogers, 1992, p. 64).

Framing an issue allows a group or individual to associate a certain meaning with a particular issue. Doing this allows a group or individual to set the agenda of a particular issue and even affect the salience of that issue for respondents. Thus, framing becomes an effective way to achieve a group or individual’s mission.

In conducting interviews with members, volunteers, and staff, there seemed to be some disagreement as to whether both creating and capitalizing on a sense of place was always the direct intent of the Buckeye Forest Council’s strategies. “I have never really heard them frame it like that before…Yeah, absolutely. I mean I keep coming back to the Dysart Woods case…what could be more representative of a sense of place” (L.
Schaeffer, personal communication, May 18, 2005). As represented by this comment, a few respondents felt that a sense of place was created by the BFC. On the other hand, almost all of the respondents agreed that in almost every campaign or activity a sense of place was in some form or another capitalized on. “I think that the organization’s successes and support do stem from a sense of place that people have and I think that perhaps unintentionally a lot of our advocacy does utilize and is assisted by people’s sense of place and perhaps we do employ that concept without actively seeking to do it” (J. Tockman, personal communication, May 18, 2005).

Moreover, there was also disagreement among respondents as to whether the Buckeye Forest Council was appropriately and successfully framing the issues so as to either create or capitalize on a sense of place. Throughout these discussions, it became clear that framing was a concern. While there are examples of ways in which the BFC has either created or capitalized on a sense of place (as in their Timber Monitoring Program), there are other examples in which respondents felt as though the BFC either missed opportunities or failed to recognize opportunities to appropriately utilize a sense of place. Understanding the group’s scope and networks will provide a lens with which to examine how they create and/or capitalize on a sense of place.

To examine this landscape and what it means to its inhabitants, however, requires a macro level approach to understanding this area’s unique history, leading to its current conditions. By its very nature the sense of place literature presents an ideal lens through which to examine a sense of place as it relates to forests in the Appalachian region of Ohio; a region typically plagued by consumptive natural resource extraction. “Located squarely between the so-called Rust Belt of the US north-east and the agricultural
heartland of the Midwest, Ohio is associated with primary extraction and industry…” (McSweeney & McChesney, 2004, p. 40). Indeed, resource extraction by the coal and lumber industries during and throughout the state’s settlement, were and are intrinsically tied to many of its inhabitant’s sense of self and place. As the boom and bust of these industries indicate, a person’s sense of self is often intrinsically tied to their natural environment and their experience with that environment. While strategies aimed at curbing resource use and focusing on conservation have emerged, these industries have remained active and much of their legacy continues to influence the region today.

To be sure, the history of this region has created a unique culture and sense of place. “In 1965, ‘Appalachia’ lost some of its topographic and cultural specificity but gained new economic resonance when 29 of Ohio’s ‘distressed counties’…were targeted for economic relief by the federal Appalachian Regional Commission” (McSweeney & McChesney, 2004, p. 40). The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) was established in 1964 by the Appalachian Regional Development Act at the urging of both President John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. The act, “declare[d] that the Appalachian region of the United States, while abundant in natural resources and rich in potential, lags behind the rest of the Nation in its economic growth and that its people have not shared properly in the Nation’s prosperity” (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2005).

As a result, social empowerment was and remains an issue of significance for this region of Ohio. It has resulted in a reflexive relationship between participation and community empowerment described within the sense of place literature as a ‘person-environment fit’ that extends beyond an individual to a person’s relation with
environmental influences; organizational factors; or social, cultural, and political contexts (Zimmerman, 1990). After all, “the common landscape is a source of shared meaning and emotion, whether liked or disliked, whether tasteful or ugly, because it is shared experience” (Riley, 1992, p. 27).

Figure 1: Economic Status of Appalachian Counties

Necessarily, both the economic and historical conditions of this area are relevant to a discussion of a sense of place. As a result, the Buckeye Forest Council has sought to frame the issue of forest protection as one intrinsically tied to the history and culture of
this region. This method of framing allows the BFC to devise strategies to ‘brand’
certain issues as culturally or historically significant; in effect, creating a reaction to a
person’s sense of place by, “instill[ing] the values of land conservation and protection
now for future generations and trying to you know -brand it as this is your heritage and
future that we are trying to protect and we need your help.” (C. Crews, personal
communication, June 7, 2005). The current Campaigns Coordinator provided an
example of how this strategy is applied.

You know with the Mohican we can talk about specific
issues about the history of Mohican and how it was created
and how there is a war memorial to honor the dead, and are
we really honoring the dead by cutting down the forests
that were put there to honor them?, Or in the Shawnee
talking about the value of wilderness areas in early forests
and the role that played in a whole variety of early cultural
history and US history and Native American values and
history (C. Crews, personal communication, June 7, 2005).

This branding serves as a way to frame the issues around public land management using
what Cheng and others describe as a phenomenological approach to the study of how
places have a way of claiming people, taking on a more iconic quality. Moreover, this
type of ‘branding’ also establishes what Schroeder describes as important in terms of
protecting and maintaining certain places in a relatively unchanged state so as to create a
sense of connection with the past.

3.1 A Sense of Place: Socially Constructed Interactions

A ‘sense of place’ was defined for this study using the available literature on the
subject. And, while the literature surrounding this phenomenon is described using two
approaches; examining the physical attributes as well as the socially constructed
significance of a sense of place, this analysis will strive to focus on how the two interact
to inform our understanding of how groups create and capitalize on a sense of place. “The making of places – our homes, our neighborhoods, our places of work and play – not only changes and maintains the physical world of living; it is also a way we make our communities and connect with people” (Stokowski, 2002, p. 373). The significance of place is not only produced via aesthetics, but also in how people interact with one another and connect to place to develop community.

Over the course of the interviews, several participants ventured to describe and characterize their own interpretations of place. As such several respondents talked about elements of the physical location as being both unique and appealing, further defining place satisfaction as described by Stedman (2003).

Of particular significance to this case study was one respondent’s own poem (which appeared in the BFC’s own newsletter; Martha’s Journal) entitled, ‘Place.’

You really did say that our lovely Appalachian state park
and its lakes
are as beautiful, in their own way,
as anything you saw in the Rockies.
This is what a love of place is all about
and what makes me treasure this place—
Because people here can say that,
really mean it,
and be understood and believed

The Appalachian region of Ohio is truly unique because of its history, culture, and people. Thus, capitalizing on this area’s unique physical attributes would seem natural.

The Buckeye Forest Council is an Ohio-based nonprofit organization working to protect public forest lands. “Within the state it is obviously most active where most forests are, which is in the southern and southeastern region of the state” (M. Reed,
personal communication, May 25, 2005). The state of Ohio has twenty state forests and one national forest. As indicated on the map, most of Ohio’s state forests are indeed located in the southeastern portion of the state.

![Figure 2: Ohio State Forests and their Location](image)

The Wayne National Forest is Ohio's only national forest. It is located in Southeastern Ohio and consists of three units; Athens, Marietta and Ironton. “Indeed, although the region [Ohio’s south-east] comprises less than one-third of the state’s total areas, it incorporates 57% of the state’s total forest cover” (McSweeney & McChesney, 2004, p. 46).

Many respondents addressed the rural landscape as a fundamental reason for choosing to live within this community. Some commented on how easily accessible
green spaces are. “I really like the forests around here. I like that I can take a bike ride to Strouds Run and go for a hike…” (S. Heitker, personal communication, July 13, 2005).

One particular respondent, after being asked to draw her sense of place, addressed many of the physical attributes that made this community important to her. In this respect, the BFC makes use of what Stedman (2003) defines as the Meaning-Mediated Model of environmental participation. This model treats aspects of the physical environment as the basis for attachment and satisfaction.

The BFC has created a sense of place by creating frames that highlight the physical attributes of the area it attempts to protect. They have done some by including pictures of this landscape on their website, sometimes graphically portraying the extraction on state forest land. Appendix D provides examples of these images. Together these sets of images appeal to a sense of place by incorporating symbolic imagery of Ohio (using native plant and tree species) as well as by evoking feelings of bereavement via the loss or destruction of these places. Indeed many respondents, in taking part in the visual imagery surveys, remembered visiting the places represented in the pictures. One respondent in examining the photos even recalled meeting her husband while hiking in Dysart Woods. Thus, these visual images create a sense of place by evoking pleasant feelings and/or memories related to either experiences or emotions felt within specific landscapes. Thus, a sense of place not only relates to physical attributes of place, but also other socially constructed features such as shared experiences felt in place.

The scope of the BFC’s activities is further defined by these socially constructed concepts of community that in turn seek to capitalize on a sense of place. With an office
Figure 3: Respondent’s Account of the Physical Attributes of Place

Sense of Place Mat

Use the mat and the markers to sketch out your maps. Make your map using whatever scale, features, symbols you choose. Don’t obsess about either the art or science of cartography. Think of this exercise as a kind of storytelling that will explain your own relationship to Athens. 

Legend
in Athens, Ohio, the Buckeye Forest Council’s work is affected by a certain local culture.

I think Athens is unique in that we are not overrun with suburban privilege and disconnection, and yet with the University and people who have moved here in the 70’s from this back-to-the-land movement that we are much richer in culture and tolerance than more rural areas where people would be more close-minded and smaller and just not intellectual, politically, and socially stimulating (H. Cantino, personal communication, May 25, 2005).

BFC members also referenced the political climate and active nonprofit community as being appealing. Still others addressed the consciousness of residents, “I specifically came for the aura of a sense of responsibility for the environment and people” (T. Singley, personal communication, May 8, 2005). One member of the Board of Directors, in seeking to characterize the community, referenced a poem she wrote to appear in an issue of Martha’s Journal. The poem uses the repetition of ‘we’ to illicit a sense of place by referencing aspects of the physical environment as a socially constructed phenomenon.

Athens

Set amid the rolling Appalachian Ohio hills,
we are a community of courage,
of hope.

We plant our gardens and feed one another.
We fight Wal-Mart’s invasion (unsuccessfully).
We build bike paths and treasure time.

We lobby
and petition
and yell.

We think about our gas consumption,
about plastics.
We plant trees and take walks together,
celebrating our trees
and our hills.

We give money;
we give time.
We cry;
we grieve,
we hug,
and we laugh.

We are a bulwark for one another
against greed
and evil
and destruction.

Refusing to be daunted, we sing together
and give ourselves hope.

The BFC has also strategically defined the scope of its organizational culture as a means to frame their role within the forest protection movement. Schein (1993) defines group culture as, “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (pp. 374-375). Although defining culture is difficult, it is an essential element to understanding any nonprofit organization.

In addressing this issue with regard to this research, respondents were asked to describe whether they felt the Buckeye Forest Council had an organization culture, and if so, to describe it. Several varied responses were given. A BFC volunteer described the group’s culture as particularly tied to its member’s sense of place.

The culture is unique to itself. There are stories remembered around camp fires, there are funny things that happened at the Buckeye Gathering last year or the first
year, particular songs that are sung, particular foods (like the biscuit and gravy) and it wouldn’t be a Buckeye Gathering without it…that kind of thing, those are the cultural elements (M. Peters, personal communication, May 23, 2005).

This description of the Buckeye Forest Council’s organizational culture also incorporates a time dimension of sense of place and memory described by Riley (1992). Creating an established annual event such as the Gathering allows the BFC to not only honor a physical place but also create a larger, more general social construction of a sense of place.

Others defined the group’s culture in terms of campaigns, lifestyle similarities among members, events, and the group’s staying power. Another volunteer described the group as, “…visionaries…they are really doing this for the love of the environment. I don’t think they have lost perspective. I don’t think they are driven by their grant funding completely like a lot of nonprofits around this area. I think that is what I like about them; their soul is in their work” (L. Schaeffer, personal communication, May 18, 2005). In addition, respondents described the group as being laid back and “…run as much as possible by consensus. It has always been a welcoming, inclusive organization” (J. Hazelbaker, personal communication, June 16, 2005). These elements of inclusion and consensus bring members together and foster a sense of place.

The BFC’s culture also embodies a degree of dedication to their mission of preservation of public lands. As a result, this dedication and commitment embodied in the group’s culture, communicates the importance of a sense of place to BFC members and staff. In effect the group’s culture relays how members are committed to protecting a sense of place within the community. Several respondents addressed the amount of
dedication that members, volunteers, and staff bring to the organization. One volunteer remembers the work that went into the Dysart Woods appeal hearings. Members were asked to help by attending the hearings to show their support for the Buckeye Forest Council. Others were asked to take part in the work necessary to appeal the Ohio Reclamation Commission’s decision to mine under Dysart Woods.

I was looking at the transcriptions and I was summarizing them…it all had to happen between Christmas and New Years…and, there were several volunteers doing the same thing, right there during that time – you know, when you are usually with family or doing something else. It was a lot of work for a lot of people, but we did it (L. Schaeffer, personal communication, May 18, 2005).

Others brought up the fact that throughout the organization’s history staff have often gone without pay. Several respondents believe that a direct result of this dedication to protecting a sense of place has allowed the BFC to enjoy a certain degree of staying power. “The culture of the Buckeye Forest Council is one of commitment of the job at all costs” (T. Singley, personal communication, May 8, 2005).

3.2 Tactics to Protect a Sense of Place

While some people, both members of BFC and the general public, are moved by this culture; others are not. The organization’s culture can cut both ways; appealing to some and offending others. “I think that there is this image that the BFC is a bunch of young anarchist, tree-hugging, weirdoes” (C. Cutcher, personal communication, May 26, 2005). Of significance in this analysis is how the group’s culture has directed programming, strategies, and tactics used to achieve the Buckeye Forest Council’s mission and thereby capitalize on a sense of place.
Indeed, the BFC professes to use all the ‘tools in the toolbox,’ even engaging in direct action tactics when necessary. During the group’s formative years when networks and education were not as highly developed, direct action tactics were more heavily relied upon. “There was never any hesitation, because we thought that was a last resort and had to be done. I think there was an element of adventure in it. Most of us were young and idealist and a lot more willing to get arrested…we didn’t have a whole lot to loose” (J.Hazelbaker, personal communication, June 16, 2005). This aspect of the BFC’s culture seeks to further establish themselves as different from other more mainstream organizations, and as a group willing to protect their community’s sense of place no matter the cost.

However, as the group’s programming has evolved to include more mainstream tactics in an attempt to appeal to a larger audience’s sense of place throughout the state and region, members and staff’s dedication has not faltered. One staff member recalled the multiple effects that the 2001 tree sit in Zaleski State Forest had on the BFC.

While Zaleski State Forest is one of twenty Ohio State Forests, at 16,000 acres, Zaleski is Ohio’s largest state forest. In the summer of 2001, the Ohio Department of Natural Resource’s Division of Forestry (DOF) initiated a 292-acre timber sale. The danger, what became known as the King Hollow Timber Sale, came by way of its size. This sale represented a proposed cut three times the size of the average state forest timber sale and was slated for partial clearing. Because the DOF was not required to do any environmental assessment or allow for any public input before cutting; the BFC, felt compelled to act in opposition. However, mainstream protests weren’t working. As a result,
...citizens took to the trees to stop the logging of the Zaleski State Forest...The protesters are suspending themselves in trees in order to impede further cutting of the public forest. (Civil Disobedience to Stop State Forest Logging, 2005).

This elaborate sit-in took place over nine days and ultimately ended in two arrests. “We took to the trees because we’ve been trying for eight years to express our concerns with the timber sale program to no avail.” (Reed, 2004, p.1).

I think that the tree sit in some ways really hurt the BFC’s image, but really build up the BFC’s image and people saw it as staff saying, ‘we aren’t just going to sit on our duffs in the court room all the time. We are going to actually put our lives on the line and actually spend a month in jail for what we believe in.’ I think...they say that the BFC had a lot of integrity. But, you know maybe some others said, ‘oh, that is too radical and we don’t want to be associated with that because it is not our style.’ (C. Cutcher, personal communication, May 26, 2005).

Whether viewed as good or bad, respondents believed that the BFC’s organizational culture contributes to the creation of a sense of place.

While the culture and role of the BFC was perceived by respondents as a double-edged sword; having both advantages and disadvantages, some realize the drawbacks to this categorization. They realize that projecting a radical image of themselves may alienate some Ohioans. Furthermore, this image could also fail to capitalize on a sense of place by denying certain beliefs and promoting a political agenda separate from place attachments. Ironically, in the end, however, this culture presents the BFC with an opportunity to reach all Ohioans appealing to each individual’s own personal sense of place.

I think the interesting thing is, especially with the staff that we have, it can straddle both worlds. I have seen Susan...
climb trees lickity split so she can hang with the anarchist and then put on a suit and sit down and lobby the legislature. I think to me that proves she is willing to work with all kinds of people…she can reach out to people and can speak in a language that everyone can understand on all sides of the issue and to me that is key; having staff that can do that (C. Cutcher, personal communication, May 26, 2005).

Stokowksi (2002) argues that understanding the social construction of place and a sense of place refocuses thinking away from purely physical attributes toward the possibility that places are always being created and manipulated by management agencies. “Value, and meaning are not inherent in any space or place – indeed they must be created, reproduced, and defended from heresy” (p. 374). The BFC in using certain tactics of protection are defended residents’ sense of place as it relates to use. The BFC in using diverse tactics is fulfilling its mission to protect places. This in turn, creates a sense of place by providing residents with the opportunity to visit and experience places that are significant to them.

3.3 A Transitional Sense of Place: The Outback Approach

As the previous Zaleski example illustrates, rural landscapes in southeastern Ohio are experiencing profound changes. As a result, citizens and governments alike are inventing creative ways to deal with increasing costs, out-migration, and environmental degradation. One solution to the increasing problems associated with transitional landscapes, such as those in southeastern Ohio, has been the adoption of what McSweeney and McChesney (2004) dub the ‘outback.’ Although outbacks typically refer to vast, sparsely settled, rangelands, they have recently been adopted by rural communities aimed at describing areas of common socio-economic and ecological
processes, thereby conveying shared meanings of perceived remoteness. Indeed, “the Ohio Department of Travel and Tourism also recently endorsed the naming of the hilly, relatively densely populated Appalachian counties of the state as ‘Ohio’s outback’” (p. 32). This emergent strategy to rename the landscape of southeast Ohio as an outback bears direct relevance to this study of a sense of place, as it effectively seeks to challenge standard notions of place.

This attempt at creating an Ohio outback comes at the intersection of three processes relevant in any discussion of Ohio and a sense of place. The term outback in this instance is being used to describe an area of non-urban landscape in a post-industrial economic transition which has given way to an ecological recovery that also offers economic renewal via tourism opportunities. The idea of an ‘Ohio outback’ emerged gradually, first appearing in an Ohio Magazine article in 1989 celebrating the biodiversity and old-growth forests in the region and evolving to a strategy used by local bed and breakfasts and promoted by then Dean of the Natural Resource Department at Hocking College, Russell Tippett. Tippett was the first to recognize the regional potential of the outback campaign which culminated in an official ‘Ohio Outback Project’ with the aim to promote southeastern Ohio as, “the Appalachian Region’s Eco/heritage Tourism destination where local folks are creating sustainable economic development, maintaining our sense of place, improving our quality of life, and effectively practicing ‘wise use’ principals” (McSweeney & McChesney, 2004, p. 42).

Thus, this strategy embraced by some of Ohio’s municipalities and local businesses represents a direct attempt to market a sense of place and use political power by evoking the recurrent articulation of outback as a means to promote
private landownership and the community’s – rather than the state’s – control of tourist services….By claiming residence in an outback, then, rural peoples are simultaneously establishing their solidarity with rural groups elsewhere, are distinguishing themselves ideologically from wilderness advocacy groups, and are asserting their claim on the landscape’s development as much as they are advertising their surroundings to urban consumers (McSweeney & McChesney, 2004, p. 39).

This solidarity created among Ohioans has not only increased access to wilderness areas, as defined as public forests and state parks; it has also helped level the playing field. By enlisting the help of networks, citizens and interest groups including those protecting public lands like the BFC have been able to work together to assert their power. The Buckeye Forest Council’s work to educate and inform the public as to the destruction taking place on public land has inspired a sense of place. This draws upon what McSweeney and McChesney dubbed the ‘outbacking’ of southeastern Ohio.

This marketing of a space is considered by some within the organization as key. “You have to figure out how it appeals to a person…And, so of course we have been able to draw upon the fact that this area of southeastern Ohio is beautiful…We absolutely have to make use of the beauty in order to grab people’s gut reactions to it” (T. Singley, personal communication, May 8, 2005). A volunteer provided an example of how the Buckeye Forest Council has attempted to use the beauty of its rural landscapes to capitalize on southeastern Ohioans’ sense of place.

We have five gorgeous Oak trees…in McArther, which is in Vinton County – which is the largest logging county in the state. And actually, people in Vinton County are very protective of those trees. I think that [these trees] draw upon their sense of place. By saying these trees represent us and not just our jobs, our point is to take it and turn it around…it does represent your job, but it also represents
your home, so you should feel protective of it (T. Singley, personal communication, May 8, 2005).

As a result, the BFC has attempted to expand upon the appeal of an outback described by McSweeney and McChesney (2004). Understanding that this particular area in southeastern Ohio is predominately supported by logging interests can shed some light on this analysis. By acknowledging that rural landscapes indeed have multiple uses, the BFC is in fact challenging the traditional ideological divide described by McSweeney and McChesney. The Buckeye Forest Council is instead focusing on the solidarity that a sense of place can invoke. “There has definitely been a divisive wedge played out in the media about how environmentalists are just against the coal miners and the logging workers” (C. Cutcher, personal communication, May 26, 2005). By focusing its efforts on finding common ground and steering away from the traditionally more disruptive jobs versus the environment frame, the BFC seeks to capitalize on all Ohioans sense of place.

This challenge is echoed in the BFC’s membership concerns. Most within the organization felt as though there needs to be more of an effort to expand the current base of their membership by reaching out to others throughout the state. “…I think we need to have a larger membership considering we have been around for eleven years.” (S. Heitker, personal communication, July 13, 2005). This might mean dealing with the problems associated with issue salience in the more urban areas of the state; in places like Toledo and Cleveland. In addition, some within the Buckeye Forest Council admittedly acknowledge that they might do well to consider expanding the current scope of their frames to include the recreational aspects of public land preservation presented in the outback example. This strategy might contribute to the creation of a sense of place; by
appealing to residents’ feelings related to how place applies to all aspects of life, including where residents ‘live, work, and play.’ “Most of the population [of Ohio] is outside the forest region…And, ironically it is those population centers that value the forest (not necessary for the same reasons that the Buckeye Forest Council does – for its intrinsic value) for their recreational opportunities…that is where a lot of support comes from” (J. Hazelbaker, personal communication, June 16, 2005).

Embracing this outback approach to landscape management could additionally provide a means for increasing networking potential. By focusing on solidarity, perhaps wilderness advocacy groups like the BFC, who seek to capitalize on Ohioan’s sense of place, can work within an expanded network that might include tourism and business interests. Together perhaps this extended network can continue to challenge the traditional ideological divide by creating a sense of place to both promote and protect rural landscapes in Ohio. However, at the same time, this might also extend the definition of place to include aspects of use not currently endorsed by the BFC.

3.4 A Place for Networks

“An issue network is a set of organizations that share expertise in a policy area and interact with each other over time as relevant issues are debated” (Berry, 1993, p. 34). These issue networks are essential to policy formulation, and perhaps best describe trends in policymaking (Berry, 1993). A discussion of networks is essential to this research into a sense of place because as political problems surrounding local places continue to be thought of in terms of their much larger significance, ‘politics of scale’ must be reconsidered. “Cox argues that geographical and political scales are best thought of not as spatial areas but as networks that link local actors defending spaces of
dependence to arenas of political and economic influence at larger-than-local scales” (Smith & Kurtz, 2003, p. 200). The BFC’s efforts are focused on protecting individual tracts of public forests within the state of Ohio. These places are better known as spaces of dependence, having unique, localized, place-specific conditions. However, in seeking to defend these spaces of dependence and using the language Smith and Kurtz, the BFC “[must also] constructs through networks of associations a space of engagement through which to achieve some mitigation” (p. 200).

For the BFC these networks include a wide variety of nonprofit groups active both nationally and regionally. Together these organizations have formed a niche aimed at protecting the state’s and region’s public forests. “This niche has included statewide public education concerning forest and ecological issues, [and] the establishment of a network of groups working on local forest issues…” (Humringhouse, 2005, p. 1). This network has naturally included several combinations of groups and organizations, based in part on the nature and scope of various campaigns.

The Buckeye Forest Council regularly works within networks. The campaigns Coordinator for the Buckeye Forest Council indeed asserted that networks, “…play a very critical role in my experience in sharing resources, both organizational resources, technical resources, and research that is being done on anything related to forest issues and national policies” (C. Crews, personal communication, June 7, 2005). The BFC regularly consults with other organizations to strategize, share resources, and communicate. These networks exist on several different levels, including national, regional, state, and local.
Nationally, several forest preservation groups exist to coordinate resources and share information. Perhaps two of the most prominent in the eastern United States are the National Forest Protection Alliance and the American Lands Alliance. Formed in 1999, the National Forest Protection Alliance (NFPA) was established to create a uniform alliance of informed groups and organizations. NFPA, consisting of 130 member organizations and twenty-four state delegates, exists to empower and engage citizens across the nation through training and assistance efforts aimed primarily at developing delegates’ abilities related to grant writing and membership development (National Forest Protection Alliance: About us, 2005).

The American Lands Alliance was formed in 1991 and is governed by grassroots leaders to ensure that activists’ voices and issues are raised in Washington, DC where decisions on national forests are made (American Lands Alliance: Who we are, 2005). The American Lands Alliance consists of ten regions throughout the United States. As part of the Central Hardwood sub-region of the Eastern Region, “the American Heartland states of Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky harbor the most extensive concentration of temperate hardwood forests in the world” (American Lands Alliance: Regions, 2005).

Collectively, these two national alliances have provided forest advocates, like the BFC, with the resources and expertise needed to protect public lands. The campaigns Coordinator expressed this by stating, “…we are all working together to coordinate our work on west, mid-west, and eastern forest issues on a national level. There is a lot of interaction there” (C. Crews, personal communication, June 7, 2005). BFC’s Campaigns Coordinator regularly communicates with other state organizations using these national
networks. “Each state has a delegate and we do monthly delegate calls, and I am Ohio’s delegate and we have an annual board meeting retreat where we get together” (C. Crews, personal communication, June 7, 2005). These networks and interactions allow the BFC to capitalize on a regional perspective and sense of place, allowing them to transcend political boundaries and appeal to a much larger sense of place as it relates to wilderness preservation in general. Beyond these national forest protection organizations, respondents also recalled working with more mainstream environmental organizations like the Sierra Club, The National Audubon Society, and The Nature Conservancy.

Regionally the Heartwood Forest Alliance (Heartwood) has also had a profound effect on public forest land preservation. Perhaps the most commonly cited example of a regional partner of the Buckeye Forest Council was Heartwood. Heartwood was organized as a result of several meetings among citizen forest activists from four states (Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, and Kentucky) in 1990 and 1991. “Those gathered recognized that their separate efforts to protect local forests were in fact parts of a larger regional effort to protect and restore the majesty, mystery, and biological diversity of the temperate hardwood forest” (Heartwood: Heartwood’s Beginning, 2005). Since its inception, Heartwood’s Alliance has grown to include member groups in eighteen different states and the District of Columbia. These states span the eastern Midwest, ranging from groups in Arkansas, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, and several states in between.

Heartwood’s member organizations have worked on a broad range of forest issues and supported several cooperate network members via financial, technical, and program support mechanisms. Heartwood believes that by uniting and empowering grassroots
activists in regional coalitions, this initiative can instill “a sense of responsibility to the communities in which we live …” (Heartwood: Community Action, 2005). Their Community Action Program includes promoting a recent Sustainable Community Initiative aimed at preserving the ‘unique local flavor of so many small towns.’

Many respondents asked to speak about the role that networks play within the Buckeye Forest Council were actually introduced to the BFC by other regionally active organizations. In fact the group’s founding member was first active within Heartwood; sitting on its Board of Directors. Moreover, he recalled that the BFC’s first major success was made possible in part by other regional organizations like the Alleghany Defense Project:

It was a kind of coalition building exercise with a group from Pittsburgh – mostly a student group that matured into more of a community group. And we had met them through another issue…[and] knew we could trust each other and they knew the Pittsburgh area, so that was helpful. I would say probably its [BFC’s] first major success, and one of its longest battles was over mining in the Wayne…So, there was a company named Bellville Mining Company that wanted to mine in the Ironton District of the Wayne. We used all the tactics, from letter writing to appeal the decisions, to protesting, and then at one point we took over a federal building that housed the office of surface mining in Pittsburgh….since then that core group went on to form the Alleghany Defense Project. And people are still in contact – some of them moved to Athens. It was a neat kind of coalition” (J. Hazelbaker, personal communication, June 16, 2005).

Another BFC member and student activist for the Alleghany Defense Project at the time also recalled the way the two groups worked together to achieve success.

I was living in Pittsburgh, and going to college there and as a result was active with a local environmental group on campus. So through that and through our networking at
school we learned about the BFC, which got started about the same time and they actually came to our town to stage a protest at the office of surface mining…That is how I met them and we formed an immediate bond because we are sister organizations (M. Peters, personal communication, May 23, 2005).

On a state level, the BFC works predominantly with the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC). Other state partners include the Ohio chapter of The Sierra Club, the Sustainable Ohio Action Project (SOAP), and the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFA). Some smaller state-wide groups working to protect Ohio’s state forests include; Voices for the Forest – a group established to protect the Shawnee State Forest and Friends of the Mohican who work to protect the Mohican Memorial State Forest in New Philadelphia, Ohio. Given the limited number of permanent, highly organized local advocacy groups, the BFC relies most heavily on state, regional, and national alliances to network.

Collectively these networks and partnerships allow the Buckeye Forest Council to establish connections among national, state, and local organizations. These connections allow for the sharing of resources and provide a means for the BFC to track national, state, and regional policy that could affect forest protection in the state. Furthermore, these networks also provide a means for the BFC to frame the scope of forest protection, capitalizing on whatever sense of place matters most. These networks allow the BFC to capitalize on local networks to protect state forests such as the Mohican Memorial State Forest and regional or national networks to protect the Wayne National Forests susceptible to legislation and court rulings outside the realm of local control.
Establishing themselves as the primary group working on public forested land protection within Ohio’s state and national forests has allowed the Buckeye Forest Council to create a powerful niche that further defines the scope of their activities. “In fact in a way the scope is actually quite narrowed because we are the only group working strictly on forest protection on the state level. I think that actually helps the Buckeye Forest Council” (M. Reed, personal communication, May 25, 2005). “The Buckeye Forest Council is perceived generally in Ohio as the group who focuses on forest and I think the BFC established itself somewhere in the late 90s as the go to group on forests…” (J. Tockman, personal communication, May 18, 2005). This status within the state’s environment movement has created a means for the BFC to direct policy by fostering a sense of place.

This public perception along with the group’s own mission has further defined the BFC’s scope. The Buckeye Forest Council’s mission statement reads,

The Buckeye Forest Council is a grassroots nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of Ohio's native forestlands and their inhabitants. Through education, advocacy, and organizing, we seek to instill in Ohioans a sense of personal connection to and responsibility for Ohio's native forests and to challenge the exploitation of land, wildlife and people. (Buckeye Forest Council: Home, 2005).

It is this mission that directs the focus of the organization. “I would say the organization’s focus is pretty clean and easy to focus on. Whereas an organization like the Ohio Environmental Council in Columbus focuses on protecting the environment and that is so broad. Having a broad focus like that makes it difficult to prioritize and easy to get sucked into things” (J. Tockman, personal communication, May 18, 2005). This
ability to prioritize has allowed the BFC to focus their efforts on protecting public lands, or spaces of dependence. Public lands protection facilitates the creation of spaces of dependence by focusing on “localized social relations…[that] define place-specific conditions…” (Smith and Kurtz, 2003, p. 2). This ability to prioritize on place specific attributes allows the BFC, in fulfilling their mission, to focus their efforts on those public lands central to residents’ sense of place, rather than on much broader environmental concerns.

The Buckeye Forest Council further addresses the scope of their activities by framing their roles within the environmental movement. The BFC has framed their role within the state as a grassroots organization. “We wanted to be different from the organizations that were housed in Columbus, like the OEC, which is a great organization…but, their main thing is walking the halls of the state house…” (J. Hazelbaker, personal communication, June 16, 2005). “The BFC was created to fulfill that role that the Sierra Club couldn’t or wouldn’t do because they are a big, national organization with national priorities…” (M. Peters, personal communication, May 23, 2005). While it is true the Buckeye Forest Council works with the more mainstream environmental movement via collaboration and information sharing, their campaigns are focused more on in-state, local issue effecting Ohioans. The Executive Coordinator of the BFC explained, “…an important tactic we use is really doing on-the-ground monitoring which some of the other forest groups, like the Sierra Club don’t do as much of…We will go out into the forests and look at timber sales…” (S. Heitker, personal communication, July 13, 2005). Thus, for many both the scope and mission of the
organization help to frame and define the group’s agenda and activities; ultimately appealing to a sense of place.

I do think that the BFC definitely tries to appeal to a person’s sense of home and the fact that you know we are from Ohio and this isn’t about something out there. I think that is why some environmental groups put me off or I feel like it is kind of like separate from my reality. Like when I think about global warming; it is so important, but it is also so big and huge. And I think the reason I get involved with the BFC is because it is about where I am from. (C. Cutcher, personal communication, May 26, 2005).

The BFC’s ability to promote themselves as a grassroots nonprofit organization also capitalizes on a sense of place by empowering local residents to protect places that matter to them. The current Development Coordinator explained it well.

The Buckeye Forest Council was started and has always been run by people who don’t buy into corporate culture and who have actively sought to take a different approach…People coordinate and collaborate, rather than take their orders from the top-down….I think people are empowered to be more inventive and creative. They are also given more latitude to insert themselves into the organization and I think for that reason it is more rewarding” (J. Tockman, personal communication, May 18, 2005).

The group’s own name is indicative of a conscious decision on the part of the group’s founder to appeal a sense of place.

I wanted a name that indicated the geographical confines of the group’s activities, but also one that represented the goals of the organization and also the structure of the organization…the Buckeye being the state tree and the Forest being what we were working to protect and Council (in my mind) meaning around a fire…a coming together of people to make decisions that benefited the community (J. Hazelbaker, personal communication, June 16, 2005).
Respondents agreed that the group’s name represents an example of how the BFC has successfully capitalized on an entire state’s sense of place.

However, despite the group’s name, the Buckeye Forest Council is regularly referred to as an ‘Athens-based, environmental group.’ In actuality the group is a state-wide organization which is only located in Athens. Other respondents believed this issue related to image was manifested in other ways as well. “There isn’t much differentiation among state-wide environmental groups” (M. Reed, personal communication, May 25, 2005). The BFC could potentially address these image issues through more appropriate framing strategies. To this end the BFC could again frame the issue differently focusing on relating the importance of place to all Ohio’s residents, not just those living near state or national forests.

Beyond simply increasing its scope, the BFC could also expand its mission. One example of this might be including private forest land protection. Currently the Buckeye Forest Council works to protect only public forest lands. This scope, while viewed by many as effective and appropriate, inherently limits the BFC’s ability to collaborate with local actors such as private landowners and nonprofits working with private land. Expanding their work with regard to wilderness preservation on private land could also provide a way for the BFC to further capitalize on Ohioan’s sense of place. As Low (1992) contends place attachment includes six types of symbolic linkages to land, including economic linkages. “Ownership of land is the most powerful example of an economic attachment in that it links people and land” (p. 170). It stands to reason that economic and genealogical interest in land which stems from ownership would necessarily increase a person’s attachment to place and sense of place.
However, any decision related to reframing or expanding BFC’s mission could have serious and long lasting effects. Indeed, while strategies aimed at enhancing its appeal might provide a means for the BFC to connect with residents living in urban areas, and increase its networking opportunities to include business interests, it is not without significant costs to the organization. By aligning themselves with recreation and tourism interests, the Buckeye Forest Council might also alienate its core constituent base -- the more traditional grassroots environmentalists.

Therein lies a fundamental dilemma. Would adjusting its frames to appeal to urbanites cause the BFC to alienate its base of support, and as a result forgo its perceived uniqueness within the greater state movement? Moreover, could marketing the landscape in this manner be construed by some as a “sell-out” by the Buckeye Forest Council? Historically, the BFC has prided itself on being an “uncompromising voice” for the forests. Take for example its opinion with regard to the Department of Natural Resources’ attempt to allow clearcutting in the Mohican Memorial State Forest under what the BFC dubs a clear pretext of “educational” logging. Would a decision to suddenly support workers rights and business interests be seen as a fundamental contradiction and conflict of interest?

And finally, how might changing their geographic location affect the organization? Could a nonprofit that does not exist within a unique cultural and physical setting, which is characterized by a highly educated population, and juxtaposed against a rural community tied to extractive industries, ever truly enjoy the same amount of success?
3.5 A Place for Connections: Empowering Citizens

The Buckeye Forest Council’s mission and strategies both create and capitalize on a sense of place. They accomplish this by educating and empowering citizens to become advocates, protecting their own special places. As a means to this end the BFC encourages “connecting people with the biodiversity…helping to educate Ohioans about the natural environment that surrounds them; instilling in them a sense of commitment to it and responsibility for its protection” (J. Tockman, personal communication, May 18, 2005).

This connection is achieved through attempts at linking people to the land. This is done by leading hikes throughout Ohio’s state and national forests within southeastern Ohio, “…sometimes just to natural areas in the state; a wetland or a hike through the Wayne National Forest…other times we will take people to a proposed logging site, or a strip-mined site and say ‘okay this is what we will lose.’” (J. Tockman, personal communication, May 18, 2005). In this way, the BFC seeks to not only connect people to physical landscapes, but to also create a consciousness by evoking a sense of place.

These hikes occur in order to educate people as well as to inspire. A volunteer for the Buckeye Forest Council echoed this sentiment when he described his own experiences with the BFC.

Even when I am in the woods and am in a strange new place, one of the weird things I like to do is I like to eat something from that forest…just to have that exchange because of course I am going to leave all sorts of things behind. There is a real tangible exchange for me and all of that contributes to a sense of place (M. Peters, personal communication, May 23, 2005).
Another similar strategy aimed at developing a sense of place and getting the citizens of Ohio to experience the outdoors is the Buckeye Forest Council’s Timber Monitoring program. The Timber Monitoring Program elicits the help of local volunteers, encouraging them to take pictures and record changes in forest landscapes while hiking local public lands.

A strong forest monitoring project is based on a core group of interested citizens who love their nearby forests. Every month or two take a hike in your adopted forest and fill out a brief forest monitor report (Buckeye Forest Council: Forest Monitoring, 2005).

This program promotes self-reliance and empowerment by creating opportunities for local citizens to become more educated about and more involved with their natural landscapes. Indeed, the BFC created this program to encourage citizens to embrace the forests of their home place and become active in their preservation.

The current Executive Coordinator explained how the Buckeye Forest Council uses this program to create and capitalize on a sense of place by encouraging Ohioans to take part in forest protection.

One of the main goals of the forest monitoring is to get people out in the woods, to try to establish a connection. So with forest monitoring what we often do is we encourage people to adopt a state forest or a section of the Wayne National Forest and then they would go out and look at timber sales in that area or just go and hike the forest and get to know the area. It serves a double function of looking at timber sales and documenting them, but a big function is also to have people go out to the woods and forests and to develop a connection with that area so they are more willing to get involved and stay involved (S. Heitker, personal communication, July 13, 2005).
This activity relates how the Buckeye Forest Council has successful drawn on a sense of place by attempting to frame the organization as one more closely aligned with the grassroots environmental movement. The BFC and its members are willing to take to the woods in order to fulfill its role as a watchdog organization; committed to protecting Ohio’s forests from extractive industries. At the same time these strategies empower the membership by giving them a voice.

The Buckeye Forest Council empowers its members and creates a sense of place through education. To be sure, a fundamental aspect of the Buckeye Forest Council’s mission is education. One volunteer admitted, “I think I have learned a lot from them about this place. I mean it is such a learning organization” (L. Schaeffer, personal communication, May 18, 2005). This education is accomplished in a number of ways. The BFC’s various educational campaigns and strategies seek to create a sense of place by informing its membership via their communication frames. The BFC accomplishes this end with the help of its website, emails, Action Alerts, public presentations, and the quarterly publication of its newsletter, *Martha’s Journal.*

The onset of technical advancements has allowed small, nonprofit groups like the Buckeye Forest Council to focus on communicating frames to the public and their members. The BFC first launched its website (www.buckeyeforestcouncil.org) several years ago. “It was probably when I started volunteering…1995 or 1996” (S. Heitker, personal communication, July 13, 2005). A volunteer from Cincinnati, Ohio spoke about how she relies on the BFC’s website and emails in order to learn what is affecting her sense of place.
They send out emails. I am on an email list. They will email out Action Alerts which are one page mailers that they send to everyone on their mailing lists and will describe what is happening in a particular forest and all the details of what is happening and then tell us what we can do, like call a congressman, write a congressman, call the Department of Forestry or who we can contact to make a difference and put our opinion in and try to change things that way (A. Carmichael, personal communication, June 14, 2005).

The Action Alerts are indeed an important way in which the BFC communicates its mission and in turn empowers its members to become more educated. One member described how she receives information from the BFC. “Well, anytime they send an email out or a sort of ‘call to action,’…I want to look at the website. Usually they have a link or something to learn more about it, and I think that is really important” (L. Schaeffer, personal communication, May 18, 2005). Thus, the BFC by creating and maintaining a website, allows members across the state to become informed on issues related to public land protection throughout the state. And, while individuals living in Toledo accessing the BFC’s website might not consider issues related to the Wayne National Forest as pertaining to them, indeed it may affect their ability to experience a sense of place tangentially.

The Buckeye Forest Council also communicates its message and frames through public events and presentations. The group regularly attends, “…events where they do ‘tabling’ which means they have a table of literature and they talk to people at the event” (A. Carmichael, personal communication, June 14, 2005). These events happen throughout the state at different times of the year. They attend festivals around important dates such as Earth Day and also travel to numerous universities throughout Ohio.
educating people about the need for and importance of forest protection. One volunteer and member described her experience tabling with the BFC at an event in Cincinnati. “I think that they do [create a sense of place] by the work they do all around the state; in all the cities all around them in Ohio. They did this one concert here…and we did some tabling with some literature and people were really digging it. And that was cool, that they went to that kind of a venue” (A. Carmichael, personal communication, June 14, 2005).

Perhaps the best example of how the Buckeye Forest Council educates and inspires Ohioans is through their newsletter, *Martha’s Journal*. Named for the last passenger pigeon, who died in 1914 in the Cincinnati Zoo, this journal is so named to remember the plight of so many species that have gone extinct, and what Ohio and the rest of the eastern United States was at its founding.

For many, this quarterly journal is perhaps the most effective means of communicating the Buckeye Forest Council’s mission. Each journal is used to educate, inform, and inspire. The journal’s editor and BFC member explained, “…we have a species spotlight and forest tales that give people an opportunity to express their own sense of place” (M. Reed, personal communication, May 25, 2005). The species spotlight focuses on educating readers about a particular species in Ohio, while the forest tales serve, “…very personal, very first-person narrative accounts of personal experiences in the forest” (M. Reed, personal communication, May 25, 2005). These elements are used to inspire local community members. The founder of BFC explained that the journal was created right away and that Martha was chosen as the focus because the story of the last passenger pigeon was a compelling story and one that really personifies the
demise of Ohio’s forests. “We wanted the newsletter to be more than just a newsletter. We wanted it to be educational and inspiring…I think we worked more on Martha’s Journal than we did actually promoting the organization, because we had the idea that…it would be an organizational builder” (J. Hazelbaker, personal communication, June 16, 2005).

Another example of the BFC’s attempt to educate and inspire a sense of place is done as a result of their road shows.

[They] consisted of an opening song as a kind of invocation of that place and place in everybody’s mind and then Susan would show a computer slide show presentation about or starting with Ohio and the general context and then focus on Dysart Woods. We would spend some time on that issue, give the updates, and then encourage people to become members. There was a question and answer time and then we would play some more songs again to foster that sense of connection and inspire those feelings (M. Peters, personal communication, May 23, 2005).

In this way the Buckeye Forest Council does indeed extend the definition of place to include what Stokowski (2002) describes as frames conveyed within songs and pictures to create a shared sense of community and belonging. This is evident in the song’s lyrics presented to road show participants which describe Appalachia. Member, volunteer, and author Matt Peters described his lyrics as being humbly about place; described by Sanders (1995) as a sense of place that acknowledges the importance of ‘modest, subtle, working landscapes’ in our own backyards. “You know when someone writes a song…I mean people write songs about broken hearts and things that move them. So, this song, and most of the other songs I write are about that; more and more they are about just the simply life” (M. Peters, personal communication, May 23, 2005).
Appalachia

Well the trail goes on before me
And I wonder where I am bound
Looking through the coal country – some place they haven’t found
Give me ground to walk upon and I will walk a mile
Clean water to in which cleanse my soul
Clean air to make me smile

Chorus:

Appalachia, Appalachia - the mother of us
I have seen the rock where Moses stood
And watched the timber fall
By now there comes a new day
And era at an end
No more will earth be stripped for coal
The wrongs of the past will mend

Ancient trees part before me as I hike these ancient hills
The hemlocks are survival of the hundred year old mills
Old skidder roads they mark the way through poplar and oak
But the dogwood, elms and chestnut are but a memory unspoken.

Chorus

Well I will hike these hills and valleys from Georgia up to Maine
Dip a toe in Canada then turn my back again
When my journey is complete
The trail is at an end
Roll up your sleeves and put the coffee on there’s wilderness to defend

Appalachia, Appalachia - the mother of us
I have seen the rock where Moses stood
And watched the timber fall
The hills of Appalachia – they will never be the same
They’ve conquered you and tamed you for corporate profit gain

Appalachia, Appalachia
Oh, look what we have gained
The greener land of paradise is where I shall remain

Songs are used by the BFC to inspire members to care about the places where they live, work, and play. “There is a definite correlation there…the union movement was
successful because of their songs…[and] the Civil Rights Movement had incredible songs. Without it the movement has no soul. In every culture, songs give vitality to everyday life, whether you are just planting corn or changing the world” (M. Peters, personal communication, May 23, 2005). Again this strategy attempts to characterize the frames presented by the Buckeye Forest Council as inherently political. Described by Low, these “narratives, that is, the telling of stories…can [also] function as a type of cultural place attachment in that people’s linkage to the land is through the vehicle of the story and identified through place naming” (Low, 1992, p. 174). These narratives can even be used to create lessons in appropriate behavior or moral teachings. In this case, the moral teachings illustrate how to “defend” Appalachia. As a result, these songs seek to create connections and encourage involvement, capitalizing on a sense of place.

Connections among members are also established by way of the group’s annual Buckeye Gathering. The Buckeye Gatherings, which first began about fourteen years ago, were created as a way for members to come together and learn. “It is a long weekend; Friday night, Saturday, and Sunday. And we do everything from star-gazing to camp fire sing-a-longs to workshops and training and in-depth explorations of different campaign issues…” (M. Peters, personal communication, May 23, 2005). These Gatherings, while staged at a different location every year are always planned to take place within a natural setting such as a park or forest. The gatherings are important in terms of creating opportunities for community outreach. For example, once a location has been determined, great lengths are taken to incorporate a local sense of place. This is accomplished usually by providing education related to the area’s natural history or by enlisting the help of resident farmers asked to donate locally-produced organic foods.
The Buckeye Gathering itself seeks to educate, connect, and inspire its members. The workshops are used as a way to educate, while the social aspects of the weekend exist to establish connections with members throughout the state and nation. “To me that is a real benefit of the Buckeye Gathering; the education that happens and the networking that happens and people start realizing that there is a way that people can start plugging in and become effective” (C. Cutcher, personal communication, May 26, 2005). Several other respondents expressed that the Buckeye Gathering also creates a way for members to experience the diversity within its membership. “You have a lot of lawyers, housewives, soccer moms, and people who have nine to five jobs as teachers or business people…people who look kind of straight” (C. Cutcher, personal communication, May 26, 2005). More than anything else, the Buckeye Gathering appears to provide its members with a way to come together and relax with friends, to learn, and to nurture their own sense of place. “To me it’s just a highlight of the fall every year to go to the Buckeye Gathering and re-connect with people from all over the state. I don’t even go to the workshops; I just work in the kitchen the whole time. To me I just love doing that and being plugged into that community” (C. Cutcher, personal communication, May 26, 2005).

3.6 A Place of Importance: Dysart Woods

Because the BFC’s campaign to protect Dysart Woods presents a case in which a group has collaborated to preserve a particular landscape that has necessarily depicted a unique sense of place for the region, this particular dispute has been chosen for analysis within this case study. Dysart Woods is significant within the state and country. Not only was it designated as a national, natural landmark, it was also recognized by the state
as being an area ‘unsuitable for mining,’ because it represents what is part of the last remaining legacy of Ohio’s white oak forests. “I think that the people who have that sense of place and who have been there know how special this place is – they do want to protect it” (C. Cutcher, personal communication, May 26, 2005). Dysart is described by the community as having unique qualities that contribute to the community’s emotional well-being.

As a unique landscape, Dysart Woods provides an example of what Cox (1998) refers to as a space of dependence; a localized place upon which residents depend and for which there are no substitutes elsewhere. “Dysart Woods…is the largest known remnant of the original forests of southeastern Ohio” (Miller, 1996, p.1). While much of the work done by BFC seeks to create a sense of place, Dysart Woods is a prime example of how the Buckeye Forest Council has worked to develop a sense of place. The Buckeye Forest Council’s deliberate attempts at protecting some of the last remaining portions of the state’s virgin forests are evident on their website. A BFC member and volunteer pointed this out when she made reference to, “…a picture of my in-laws next to a huge tree in Dysart Woods…you know they are just farmers and an older couple who are very say ‘Ohio’ and I think that is why they used that picture…” (L. Schaeffer, personal communication, May 18, 2005). Indeed, the intent of this strategy is to humanize the impact that the extractive industries can have on the citizens of Ohio, appealing to their sense of place.

“The attempt to preserve Dysart Woods has a long history and struggle” (McCosker, 2004, p. A15). The primary issue within this particular dispute is whether to allow room and pillar mining to occur under Dysart Woods. Dysart Woods was
originally owned and cared for by the Dysart Family. However, upon sale of the family
farm in 1962 this fifty-acre tract of land was given to the Nature Conservancy and later,
in 1967, deeded to Ohio University, with the expressed responsibility of preserving this
forest in its natural state (Miller, 1996). However, the original agreement between the
Nature Conservancy and Ohio University applied only to the area’s surface rights and not
the mineral rights, which are owned by the Ohio Valley Coal Company (OVCC).

In the summer of 2003, OVCC began applying to the Ohio Department of Natural
Resources: Division of Mineral Resource Management (DMRM) for a permit to begin
mining under Dysart Woods. On August 15, 2004 permit D-0360-12 was granted,
allowing OVCC to begin mining under and in the vicinity of Dysart Woods. In protest
and in realization of this area’s unique old-growth forest habitat, fragile landscape, and
potential contribution to residents’ sense of place, Ohio University filed a precautionary
appeal on September 15 with the ODNR to slow down the mining process in order to
gather more information (Phillips, 2004). However, January 21, 2004 Ohio University
reached a settlement with OVCC. In exchange for dropping its appeal, Ohio University
received three monitoring wells and a $10,000 grant from ODNR to assist in a Water

Despite OU’s decision to withdraw its appeal, Dysart Defenders, a group of
Athens residents and OU students, along with the BFC chose to continue the appeal
process. As a result, the Ohio Reclamation Commission, a seven-member group of
governor appointed individuals, heard the appeals in a series of hearings that occurred
from September through December. In May of 2005 the Commission ruled in favor of
OVCC, allowing room and pillar mining to occur under Dysart Woods. An appeal to this
latest decision was filed by the BFC with the 7th District Court of Appeals on June 17, 2005 and a decision is pending.

Clearly the Buckeye Forest Council’s decision to become involved with Dysart throughout the years was challenging. For a small nonprofit with limited resources, the BFC had to seriously weigh the costs and benefits of such a decision. However, in the end the decision was described by one member as being a ‘no-brainer.’ The Executive Coordinator remembers her reaction when the final permit was granted and BFC’s decision to appeal was made:

So we just went with it and this was the permit that would do the most damage and the one we had been waiting for. Of course, we were going to challenge it. There really wasn’t even much thinking about it…We talked about what would be needed and that it would come down to a battle of experts and that we would have to hire experts if we wanted to challenge this properly and…the fact that we would have to raise about $60,000 (S. Heitker, personal communication, July 13, 2005).

In the end the group did raise the money and hired the experts they felt were needed in order to present its best case against the mining permit, thus preserving this unique place which for many sustains their own sense of place.

However, the decision to appeal the mining permit was not without its own costs. In the end the group spent about $77 – $80,000 on Dysart over the years with its attorneys, Rick Sahli and Fred Gittes, providing free legal services. “That is huge. It is definitely the most we have ever spent on a campaign” (S. Heitker, personal communication, July 13, 2005). The Buckeye Forest Council’s board president speaks to the decision. “It has been both a curse and a blessing, because it has drained our resources incredibly, but it has also given us more visibility and more stature because we
did a really good job of presenting the case…” (H. Cantino, personal communication, May 25, 2005).

Contrary to other respondent’s comments, the board president at the time of the decision cautioned that the decision was anything but easy:

> There was a lot of emotion involved - a lot of emotion and a lot of questioning the role of the organization; part of which is litigation and part of it (what I was worried about as a leader at the time), is sustainability of the organization...Dysart is a tricky case…” (T. Singley, personal communication, May 8, 2005).

Part of the concern over the decision itself was also based on appropriate resource use. While many understood the significance of Dysart Woods, some felt as though it was a risk to appropriate so much time and effort into such a small piece of land that was privately owned; especially given the extent of other state and national public lands within the region. Many felt as though the decision would result in the Buckeye Forest Council, “becoming too narrowly focused.” Others felt as though the BFC has a responsibility to become involved because, “…we are a watchdog organization. If we aren’t going to take care of something in our own backyard that we have been working on for ten years and just let it slide that is really going to hurt our reputation” (C. Cutcher, personal communication, May 26, 2005). Thus, in the end the group chose to become involved, constructing its decision as necessary, and attempting to frame Dysart as a space of engagement for its members.

> …in some ways Dysart, and the battle to save Dysart, isn’t so much about that forest, but values of old-growth and holding state agencies accountable for doing their jobs…It is challenging the business as usually mentality in Ohio…at the end of the day, we may not be able to save it [Dysart], but part of what we were doing is using that as a way to try
and raise the debate and people’s awareness about what has been going on. At some point… you have to draw a line in the sand and say this far and no further. In some ways Dysart was that for us (C. Crews, personal communication, June 7, 2005).

The Buckeye Forest Council also sought to establish this decision as essential, promoting this issue as a way of taking back its power within the environmental movement. Campaign Coordinator for the BFC explained,

It [the Dysart Campaign] has also been a great example to point to about the corrupt politics in Ohio’s agencies when it comes to resource extraction, whether it is timber, oil and gas, or coal. And it has really shown people that the underdog still plays a very important role in politics today…So we have to keep fighting them, whether it is in the courts, or forests, or papers. Trying to use that as a tool to bring people together… (C. Crews, personal communication, June 7, 2005).

Thus, the BFC has attempted in several ways to transform Dysart Woods, a space dependant place, to a space of engagement, or “network within which local actors defend places” (Smith & Kurtz, 2003, p. 200).

The BFC, in promoting its mission, established this case as a way to capitalize on Ohioans sense of place. This case provided a way for the BFC to empower its base while seeking to cultivate its membership throughout the state. According to Crews,

We have definitely generated an interest around that, but I think that it has also increased our own membership and outreach abilities, it has also highlighted why it is important for groups like ourselves to be doing the work we are doing…someone needs to be out there advocating for the last wild areas, these last forested areas, and really creating a voice for everyone in Ohio who really cares about these things but don’t really feel empowered or know how to make a difference (C. Crews, personal communication, June 7, 2005).
Indeed the BFC values Dysart Woods as a symbol of Ohio’s heritage and as a result has sought to capitalize on this symbol’s ability to inspire and empower Ohioans. As evidence of this the BFC hired a field organizer to work with citizens of Belmont County being affected by the extractive industry. Her fundamental job was to educate citizens on the consequences of long-wall mining as well as to, “connect them to resources, legal support, and just fighting the coal companies who were destroying their homes” (M. Peters, personal communication, May 23, 2005).

Few would argue that Dysart Woods is a unique part of the Ohio physical landscape. However, does this place also represent the socially constructed concept used to describe a sense of place? The BFC has indeed attempted to create and capitalize on this unique area’s sense of place. But, how effective has this effort been?

Despite its failed attempts at appealing the Ohio Reclamation Commissions mining permit, the BFC does view its decision to become involved with this case as necessary, and in the end successful. Despite this, the BFC’s ultimate attempt at using a sense of place to create and/or frame Dysart Woods as a space of engagement was not completely realized. So what went wrong?

To begin, the BFC failed to highlight the effect that its actions had in this case. “The Dysart Woods case is a really great example of this…the original mining plan that was to occur under Dysart Woods was long-wall mining,” and admits, “this was something we lost sight of…” (S. Heitker, personal communication, July 13, 2005) She went on to explain that it wasn’t until recently that she remembered the significance of the BFC’s pressure on the Division of Mineral Resource Management. It was this pressure that caused the Division to order the coal company to modify its plan, only
allowing room and pillar mining under the forest, and the more destructive long-wall mining 300 feet away. She clarified, “while the current plan still has problems and we are still concerned, there are different rates of threats and so while we are still fighting it [this modification] was actually a really big accomplishment” (S. Heitker, personal communication, July 13, 2005). Unfortunately, this success was never really capitalized on in the media and many are still unaware of this significant change. The results of this failed attempt at capitalizing on a sense of place will not doubt be profound, both for the BFC as an organization and for the community who risks no longer being able to experience this place in its original condition.

In addition the BFC, in not utilizing the space of engagement as effectively as it could have, did not take full advantage of the networks within which local actors defend places. While it is true the BFC did coordinate to a small extent, it failed to summon the appropriate local neighborhood support from residents living next to Dysart Woods (as was the case in the community gardens example). One respondent expanded on this by recalling a story of a 200-year-old farm next to Dysart whose well went dry and whose foundation is slipping due to the subsidence as a result of long-wall mining. She reacted by stating, “People respond to people’s stories. I would really like to see more evidence of that kind of effect that the coal companies are having on the people in the community” (C. Cutcher, personal communication, May 26, 2005). Perhaps personalizing the destruction in this manner might further capitalize on a sense of place within the community.
Finally, Low (1992) argues that place attachments are created by using symbolic linkages connecting people to the land. One such link refers to a person’s ability to visit a special place. Low states that

Pilgrimage to a place, the desire to visit a place, and participation in a celebratory event such as a parade or festival is a special kind of place attachment, in that the experience of the place, although intense, is usually transient, but the idea of the place and its religious, spiritual, or sociopolitical importance lingers on for years (p. 173).

Low goes on to explain that even the desire to visit a special place creates powerful place attachments. Indeed, just spending time thinking about the opportunity or planning the event is significant to establishing a sense of place. Perhaps, the BFC in attempting to protect Dysart Woods might well have benefited from organizing pilgrimages to Dysart Woods in order to create and capitalize on the effect that place attachments have on a sense of place. To be sure, one member of the Buckeye Forest Council who responded to this research lives in Maryland and only first visited Dysart Woods some twenty years after attending school at Ohio University. He suggests that it was this pilgrimage to Dysart that created for him a sense of place.
Chapter 4: Conclusions

This particular analysis of the Buckeye Forest Council contributes to Riley’s (1992) contention that as nature becomes less common, so too does the role that individuals can and do play in its protection. Due to limited resources and a lack of political clout, individuals must work within groups or organizations to succeed. Moreover, these groups are also increasingly having to collaborate within networks to share resources needed to expand the realm of centralized power from individuals to communities. The Buckeye Forest Council, in working within regional networks, has sought to foster a sense of place using education, inspiration, and advocacy. They have done so by investing in several programs and strategies aimed at establishing connections between residents of Ohio and the places they perceive as significant to their own well-being. These activities have included the BFC’s Timber Monitoring program, the creation and publication of Martha’s Journal, varied and numerous educational opportunities and events, and their own conference known as the Buckeye Gathering. Together these programs, publications, and strategies have combined efforts to seek to create and capitalize on a sense of place within southeastern Ohio. But, how effective have these attempts been?

This research into how groups create and capitalize on a sense of place has produced several examples of different strategies aimed at connecting people to the land. Some of these strategies appear particularly effective. The BFC’s newsletter, Martha’s Journal provides an example of how a group can create a sense of place. Martha’s Journal appears to educate residents, while at the same time inspiring involvement. The “Species Spotlight” seeks to educate residents about native species, while “Timber Tales”
provides residents with a way to share their experiences in nature, in effect creating a sense of place for many. The BFC’s Timber Monitoring Program provides an example of how a group might capitalize on a sense of place. This program, in eliciting the help of volunteers, appeals to an individual’s sense of place by encouraging them to experience the outdoors. It also provides citizens and BFC members with a way to become directly involved with the protection of public lands, ensuring that they and others can continue to experience a sense of place. Similarly, the Buckeye Gathering also encourages this natural experience. However, it also seeks to create an opportunity for BFC members and community residents to come together and experience nature, capitalizing on socially constructed connections to place.

The BFC in attempting to create a sense of place by taking an uncompromising view of protection, has perhaps not just alienated potential support, but also compromised the effectiveness of the decision-management process itself. The BFC, in defining a sense of place as it has, may constrict the socially constructed meaning of place in a manner that might discourage others from participation in the decision-making process. Southeastern Ohio is perhaps best known for its extractive industries. And while logging and mining practices have historically maintained the state’s economy, this has not been without cost. “In southeastern Ohio the challenge is that you have a thick history of mining and logging practices and it is very hard for people to overcome this barrier - of the Buckeye Forest Council as being against jobs” (T. Singley, personal communication, May 8, 2005). Several respondents were all too quick to clarify, stating that the Buckeye Forest Council is not against jobs and has continually advocated for sustained logging practices. “In fact we are about jobs, just refocusing the energy and training people to
think about the forest as public lands that have multiple uses…” (T. Singley, personal communication, May 8, 2005). Perhaps the BFC could benefit from strategies aimed at communicating this more effectively to both the public as well as other important stakeholders involved in resource decision-making by reaching out to those groups with perspectives traditionally seen as adversaries to establish the potential for networking opportunities.

This potential could also be realized by engaging in more collaborative decision-making. Perhaps, nonprofit groups like the Buckeye Forest Council, who have traditionally been faced with insurmountable odds and powerful adversaries could benefit from collaborative decision making. However, to do so would also mean abandoning “uncompromising” attitudes and embracing a willingness to work with all parties, essentially working to decentralize power.

Perhaps Durbin provides the most insight into how power affects resource management decision-making, when she states that the “goal is not to capture power but to break it down to a point where it is human-scale, a level at which people can have a say or a vote about how to manage the energy, food, products and resources of the area where they live” (Durbin, 1996, p. 72). While this might initially appear to contradict Riley’s analysis related to individual versus group roles, a more in-depth analysis proves otherwise. Individuals comprise an organization. However, it is the collective actions of these individuals that give a group its strength. While individuals can and do create a sense of place for themselves, this analysis acknowledges the fact that organizations, through networking, education, and communication, might more effectively create and capitalize on a sense of place. This is because groups of individuals are better equipped
to transform a space of dependence to a space of engagement. Simply put, groups are better able to establish power than individuals who are acting alone.

Despite its attempt at transforming place from a physical concept to a socially constructed reality, the difficulties experienced by the BFC in this case study serve to highlight what is perhaps an issue of contention for similar grassroots, nonprofit agencies. Significant to this research is the dilemma of scale. Throughout the interviews, respondents either opening addressed or at least alluded to a catch-22 related to scale. While the BFC has seemingly embraced its role as the predominant grassroots organization within the state environmental movement, it has in turn limited its ability to reach out to a broader spectrum of support.

In addition to affecting the group’s mission, this dilemma of scale also affects the BFC’s ability to deal with issues related to organizational sustainability. Throughout the group’s existence, issues related to sustainability have indeed affected the BFC’s capacity to achieve its mission. At the time of its founding the BFC was located in Columbus. However, the founder quickly moved the office, citing, “I wanted to move the office to Athens…and I justified it because that is where the work is being done…” (J. Hazelbaker, personal communication, June 16, 2005). For the next eight years the BFC offices were located on Court Street; a main thoroughfare close to Ohio University’s campus in downtown Athens, Ohio. Although many respondents believed this to be the best location in terms of access to resources and volunteers, it was also considered by many to be the least conducive to work due in part to the limited space and daily distractions. As a result, the offices were moved to a rented house north of Athens in the Plains, Ohio. Finally, in July of 2005 the offices were moved into the Executive
Coordinator’s basement. This move was almost entirely based on the group’s financial difficulties resulting from expenses incurred by the Dysart Woods case. Indeed this issue produced some of the most contention among members and staff and is thought by many to facilitate other problems related to membership, group communication, and public support. Some respondents felt as though the group’s presence (by way of the office’s physical location) has limited the BFC’s ability to reach out to others and as a result also restricted its capacity to create and capitalize on a much larger sense of place.

To address these issues, several respondents suggested that perhaps establishing satellite offices around the state might allow the BFC to broaden the scope of its activities, better connecting to potential members and donors. However, the BFC Board of Directors and staff realize that this possibility is almost entirely dependant on the group’s financial situation in the future. The past board president summed up the issue of sustainability well:

> The challenge with the Buckeye Forest Council is balancing the role in the state as watch dogs for protecting public forested lands while also surviving as an organization. And, history will tell you that we have always survived, even when we have gone in the hole, however, do we want to maintain that culture? (T. Singley, personal communication, May 8, 2005)

Small changes have been made to address the issue of long-term survival such as the adoption of by-laws, the clarification of job descriptions, and the creation of specific committees to address the issue of membership.

The fundamental dilemma of scale affecting group sustainability and mission is this; how does a group like the BFC which embraces its role as a grassroots organization also simultaneously attempt to appeal to a much larger membership while also increasing
and retaining the resources necessary to sustain it into the future? Moreover, because the BFC is one of a few state organizations working to protect public lands, it is unrealistic to assume that it can ever truly establish itself as legitimate in terms of also creating a sense of place for Ohioans, without first addressing issues related to sustainability. To be sure, the BFC is unique in its ability to simultaneously affect a peoples’ sense of place while also achieving its mission. However, this uniqueness is contingent upon the BFC’s ability to sustain itself now and in the future. Research into this organization indicates that the BFC is a group, who in realizing these dilemmas of scale, is on the cusp of making an important decision regarding whether to embrace its role as grassroots or transcend its geographic location to include a much broader base of support.

Sirmon et al. (1993) in referring to this dilemma of scale define the issue differently, describing a sense of place as more than just a geographic location. By focusing ecosystem-based resource management on ‘communities of interest,’ Sirmon et al. maintain the importance of scale in decision-making. They define ‘communities of interests,’ as shared interests that transcend geography, allowing for broad base support. Duane (1997) expanded on this framework, arguing that resource management must involve communities of interest, communities of place, and communities of identity (based on social characteristics that transcend place). Defining and packaging a sense of place in this manner could potentially address dilemmas of scale. Thus future research should examine these perspectives and in doing so develop practical solutions to also address dilemmas of scale.

Realizing that a sense of place can only be achieved through a unique interplay of physical attributes and socially constructed meanings goes a long way to understanding
how both individuals and groups can create and capitalize on a sense of place. However, this realization is little more than a starting point. New research should expand upon this emerging field of inquiry, examining how groups create and capitalize on a sense of place. As such, research should include examinations into how a sense of place is defined by groups, how a group’s culture and tactics can affect the ways in which a sense of place is constructed and/or used, and how issues of access and equity combine to challenge how a sense of place is maintained within a space of engagement.

A sense of place in this analysis has been defined by the available literature on the subject. And while respondents in this research admit that the creation of a sense of place as defined in this instance is not necessarily part of the group’s mission, it is recognized as perhaps an unintentional product of their work to protect public lands. What is of concern, then, is that this particular understanding of a sense of place may in some way limit the BFC’s ability to create a space of engagement necessary in order to enlist the help of other networks, not traditionally seen as viable. This applies directly to suggestions related to broadening the group’s mission to include multiple use designations on public lands, or different altogether the inclusion of private lands. Thus, research into how groups or organizations with perhaps different or competing missions define a sense of place is essential to understanding how decisions regarding land management are made.

The current sense of place research also needs to be expanded to include not just issues related to defining a sense of place, but also issues related to group culture. This new research should examine how the struggle to create group identity can and does affect how a sense of place is capitalized on within an organization. This case study
sheds light on the difficulties faced by groups struggling to either create or maintain a group identity and image. Grassroots organizations in particular are often faced with multiple challenges relating to sustainability and group mission. It is often difficult for nonprofit organizations, like the BFC, to effectively advocate its mission, while simultaneously dealing with issues related to fundraising and membership. Thus, new research into organizations, should examine how tactics and programming aimed at either creating or capitalizing on a sense of place affect other important administrative functions within the group itself. Perhaps more research into a sense of place could provide insight into how nonprofit organizations could develop fundraising around a prospective contributors’ sense of place.

Although these findings suggest that more research is needed, it is also imperative to examine how this future research can relate to resource management. This discussion seeks to address how this case study which examined how a group constructs and capitalizes on a sense of place can indeed provide more than just data for decision makers. More importantly, how can this research address what Cheng et al. (2003) refer to as the transformation of the decision-making process itself?

*The Ecology of Hope* can enlighten and attempt to answer this question. Bernard and Young (1997) argue that the future of resource decision making rests with the creation of an ‘ecology of hope.’ They characterize this ecology of hope as a journey to find the path to sustainable resource management. Similar to Cox’s (1998) description of networking involved in creating spaces of engagement, Bernard and Young discuss how their own research into public lands management has informed their understanding as to the effectiveness that networks and collaboration can have in resource decision-making.
Their own research and experience has caused them to support the cultivation of a sense of place in order to substantiate the effect that decentralized power can have on the decision-making process. “What is delightfully refreshing about the forums we’ve encountered…is that they are much more inclusive than anything that precedes them. They are safe places for ideas to flow and for power, in the old sense, to be relinquished. And therefore they are paradoxically empowering” (Bernard & Young, 1997, p. 202).

Whatever the answers to these questions, it is clear, based on this case study, that grassroots, nonprofit organizations like the BFC are indeed both creating and capitalizing on a sense of place. They accomplish this through various attempts at educating, networking, and framing. In addition, it is also clear that simply creating and/or capitalizing on a sense of place is not always enough.

Our world has embarked upon a time in history when many are enticed to turn the other cheek and accept whatever environmental degradation is to occur. However, the Buckeye Forest Council, along with countless other grassroots nonprofit organizations across the world, has made a conscious decision to try to protect both the special and humble places that contribute to our own sense of place. A member of the BFC explained well the efforts at attempting this feat:

At a time when you see this mass exodus of activists moving to Oregon and California and Washington seeking that pristine, natural beauty somewhere else…I have to ask Susan, ‘don’t you sometimes wish you lived somewhere like that, where there were more progressive politics?’ and she always says, ‘no, this is my home.’ And the thing about that is we cannot just abandon our home, we have a responsibility to take care of the places where we are from. And that is what the battle here is all about. Ohio is one of the most polluting states in the nation and we have the worst air quality, the worst water quality…We can help
control that and help protect what is our home. Maybe that can spill out into other areas…I have traveled around the would and felt drawn to living somewhere else…But, my work in this world is to take care of the place where I live and really invest in the place that invested in me. That is what pulls me to get involved with groups like the BFC (C. Cutcher, personal communication, May 26, 2005).

The BFC and its membership have made a conscious decision to invest in both the special places of inspiration to many, along with the places ignored by many. Certainly, these places, whether unique or humble serve as home to many and as Stokowski (2002) teaches us, “places are always capable of being discursively manipulated toward desired (individual or collective) ends” (p. 374). The BFC has done just that; the BFC has made a conscious decision to both create and capitalize on its community’s sense of place. The results have been nothing less than inspiring.

“To be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and to know your place” (Relph, 1967, p. 1). As I conclude this research, I find myself in a completely different place from where I started -- intellectually, emotionally and physically. And while I have learned a lot, what I will always take with me is that place is a fluid, dynamic, and powerful piece of us all.

A deep human need exists for associations with significant places. If we choose to ignore that need, and to allow the forces of placelessness to continue unchallenged, then the future can only hold an environment in which places simply do not matter. If, on the other hand, we choose to respond to that need and to transcend placelessness, then the potential exists for the development of an environment in which places are for man, reflecting and enhancing the variety of human experience (Relph, 1967, p. 147).
Indeed, place defines us as individuals, groups, and cultures. And as we go forward and live our lives - polluting or protecting as we go - lest we forget what we have learned here; that to ignore the significance of place is to deny ourselves and each other.
References


Appendix A: Buckeye Forest Council Board of Directors and Staff Biographies.

Heather Cantino: (Athens, OH) -- Since coming to southeast Ohio in 1981, Heather has been doing public education, campaign development, fundraising, and lobbying on a variety of environmental and social justice issues at the local, state, and national levels. In addition to developing and running the Rural Action Safe Pest Control Program, she has served on the Athens City Wellhead Protection Advisory Board, the Ohio Environmental Council board, and other political and environmental action committees. Currently Heather also serves on the Calliope Feminist Choir Steering Committee. She has been a member of and contributor to the BFC since learning of its existence in the late ’90s and is in her second year as a BFC board member.

John Coppinger: (Guysville, OH) -- John Coppinger, D.O., graduated from the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1992. After an internship at Atlantic City Medical Center, he moved to Athens and began private practice in 1994. He is currently practicing general osteopathy in The Plains, Ohio. His practice emphasis is on the health of the whole patient and he uses the least invasive modalities possible. He is a member of the Buckeye Forest Council. He participated at the Buckeye Gathering in 02, as well as the Eastern Forest Defense Action Camp. He hopes to bring to the Buckeye Board his experience in management and business, as well as a long term picture of activism in many forms.

Mark Spring: (McArthur, OH)-- Mark conceived and co-organized the Hearthstone Summer Art Festival in Toledo, Ohio (1999), an art festival that sponsored and benefited five local non-profit health, environment, and social organizations. He has done extensive volunteer work for the Manhattan Marsh Project in Toledo, Ohio. Mark has also sold outdoor photography for the benefit of environmental organizations since 1996. Mark is entering his fourth year of teaching.

Cat Cutcher: (Rutland, OH) — Cat Cutcher has been a member of the Buckeye Forest Council since 1999, and is best known to the BFC as a cook during our annual Buckeye Gatherings. As a lifetime resident of Ohio, she enjoys the beauty of the forests and farmland and is committed to preserving the unique rural character of our state. Cat was born and raised in Central Ohio and has lived in Southeast Ohio for the past 7 years. She currently lives at Willow Organic Farm in beautiful Rutland, OH. Cat and her partner Joe Beres raise organic fruits, vegetables, and herbs as well as goats, chickens, ducks, cats, dogs, and a bull calf. Cat’s academic background is in Anthropology, African Studies, and International Development studies. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Cultural Studies in Education at Ohio University. She has also worked with non-profit community and educational organizations serving culturally diverse populations for the past 10 years. She has extensive administrative experience with grant writing and reporting, financial management, membership development, and program administration. Her hobbies include backpacking, traveling, writing, reading, photography, singing, dancing, laughing, cooking, knitting, community organizing and grassroots activism.
Dave Pearson: (Chillicothe, OH) — Dave worked in the oil and gas industry for 15 years. He has been a member of the Buckeye Forest Council since the second gathering at the Mohican. Dave is teaching himself the Double Bass and Horology.

Eric Pawlowski: (Pickerington, OH) — Presently residing with family near Columbus, employed as the Organic Farm Coordinator for Shepherd's Corner at Dominican Acres. Part-time employment includes Organic Farm and Process Inspector, and Ohio High School athletics official. Active organizing concerns include: family farm preservation, local food security, genetically modified organisms, historic and public land preservation. Previous Board of Directors experience includes: Contemporary Arts Center of Cincinnati, Friends of Findlay Market, Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association, and the Buckeye Forest Council.

Mark Bailey: (Rockbridge, OH) — I have been a resident of Hocking Hills for the last 20 plus years. I have hiked and foraged in the Hocking state Forest extensively. An amateur naturalist, I am familiar with most flora and fauna species and their specialization and interdependencies. As a master carpenter, I have supplied my own timber needs for buildings and furniture through sustainable harvest in my own forest, primarily salvaging storm-damaged trees where feasible. I currently derive my income through my cabin rental business relying on the tourism industry of this beautiful region. My wife, Bella, and I host a weekly gathering of folk musicians collectively known as the Twisted Pickers. We have two children, a dog, a cat, a horse, and an extensive circle of friends and acquaintances. I grow a garden, heat with wood, derive my spiritual sustenance from nature, play music, and windsurf.

Michelle Sampson: (Dayton, OH) — Michelle Sampson is very honored to be considered as a member of the Board of Directors of the Buckeye Forest Council for the next term. She currently lives in Dayton, Ohio, and joined the Council in 2000 while living in Athens. She was motivated to join the organization to become more aware of local environmental issues and to meet like-minded individuals in the area. As a longtime backpacker, hiker, and bike rider, she has been able to experience some of Ohio's parks and public lands and is committed to their stewardship. Her interest in activism began in the mid-1990 with the Walk for Justice to bring public awareness to environmental and political issues on Native American reservations. Her careers as both a theatrical costume designer and as an educator have helped her hone her skills, particularly in the areas of communication, collaboration with diverse team members, creative problem solving, and crisis management. She hopes to bring these skills, with enthusiasm and energy, to the service of the BFC.

Randy Cunningham: (Cleveland, OH) — Randy has been active since the late 1960s in anti-war movements (Vietnam to Iraq), Central American Solidarity (trips/work brigades El Salvador and Nicaragua), to housing and inner city neighborhood issues. He works for the Cleveland Tenants Organization. He has just completed a history of community organizing in Cleveland. His articles and essays have been published in newspapers, magazines, and literary journals. Cunningham has always considered himself to be an
environmentalist since growing up in Missouri, where he was much more interested in wandering the Oak-Hickory forests around his house, than sports. His activities have been for the most part as an active sympathizer who can be counted on to write letters, and send money to groups like the BFC. He is a fanatic canoehead. He hopes his involvement on the board of the BFC will repay to the Earth the activities of an ancestor timber estimator who helped level the forests of the Ozarks in the late 19th century.

Janet Seeds: (Columbus, OH) — Janet Seeds has been a member of the Buckeye Forest Council since its inception. She works as an office administrator and is involved in wildlife rehabilitation and habitat restoration.
Appendix B: Interview Guide

Demographics:
Name:
Position/Affiliation with BFC?
Gender:
Age:
Race/ethnicity:

Place:
Where is your ‘place’ of residence? Are you a member of the local/regional community?
How long have you lived in this place?
Do you feel personally attached to this ‘place’? Why/why not?
What qualities of this ‘place’ are most appealing to you? Why?
How does living/working in this particular ‘place’ make you feel?
Do you feel a strong commitment to protecting/preserving this ‘place’? Why? And how do you feel you can do so?

The Buckeye Forest Council:
How did you first become aware of the BFC?
What is/are the BFC’s mission/goals?
What types of activities does the BFC typically engage in, in order to achieve their mission?
How effective do you feel these activities are in achieving their mission?
Have these actions/activities/strategies ever been challenged/derailed forcing the BFC to engage in more traditional activities (civil disobedience, tree-sits, etc)?
What prompted you to become involved with the BFC?
How long have you been associated with the BFC?
In what capacity have you been involved with the BFC? (i.e. Volunteer, paid employee, financial contributor, etc)
Is the work you do with the BFC on an individual level or do you regularly participate with other group members?

BFC & Networks:
Does the BFC ever work with other organizations to achieve its goals/mission? If so, to what extent?
In your opinion, is this an appropriate strategy? Why/why not?
Are their situations in which this strategy has/could potential limit the BFC’s ability to achieve their own mission?
Are the relative roles of these groups/networks of organizations compartmentalized? (i.e. BFC handles legal issues, while Dysart Defenders handles grassroots mobilization).
Does the BFC ever link up with other groups and participate in already established events in order to garner media attention? Why/why not? In your opinion does this effort affect the outcome? If so, how?
How is the BFC portrayed in the media (local or otherwise)?
BFC & Place:
Where (geographically speaking) is the BFC active?
Does the scope of the BFC’s activities, help or hinder their ability to achieve their mission? How/why?
In your opinion, does the BFC seek to create a sense of place? If so, how do they achieve this end?
In your opinion, does the BFC’s work effect how you/others view place? If so how/why?
Can you think of a personal example which might explain how/why?

BFC’s Organizational Culture:
How does your involvement with the BFC make you feel?
Have you ever visited the BFC’s office?
What did you think of the office’s physical location/setting?
Have you ever visited the BFC’s website?
What did you think of the site? (Was the web site easy to navigate? Did the web site offer useful information?)
Does it appear as though the web site is regularly updated? How could the web site be improved?
Does the BFC have an organizational culture?
In your opinion, how effective is the BFC’s leadership?
Is the BFC a successful organization? Why/why not?
What can the BFC do to improve as an organization?

Sense of Place & Dysart Woods:
Have you ever visited Dysart Woods?
In your opinion, is Dysart Woods significant to the quality of life in this region? Why/why not?
Why is this place so unique?
Appendix C: Sense of Place Mat

Because this method of data collection was experimental and respondents were given limited verbal instructions, the results for this social mapping activity were limiting. The majority of respondents in examining the mat chose to describe their particular sense of place in a global perspective. The results, however interesting, were insignificant to this research and thus not included.
Appendix D: Photo Interviewing and Visual Imagery Pictures

Visual Preference Survey Guide:

Please examine each image for a few seconds. Now, please rate how well you like/dislike the image on a scale of -10 to +10, with 0 being neutral.

Why did you rate it this way?

Photo Interviewing Guide:

What are the first words that come to your mind when looking at these images?

How do these images affect how you experience a sense of place?

Have you seen this image before?

Are you familiar with the locations depicted by these images? Have you ever been to this location?

In your opinion which set of images would persuade you to act to protect/preserve this place?
Mohican-Memorial State Forest, 10/08/2004

Shawnee State Forest
Mature Hardwoods in Dysart Woods
http://www.buckeyeforestcouncil.org/gallery/dysart_hike1_4.10.04/pages/big-trees.jpg.htm

Shawnee State Forest