

# CARBON COUNTY MONTANA

**REVIEW DRAFT**

**GROWTH POLICY  
2014**



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



This growth policy was made possible by the contributions and cooperative input from numerous citizen participants, local stakeholders, county and city staff members, and elected and appointed officials. The project team thanks all those that participated, including the following:

## **Carbon County Commission**

John Grewell, District 2, Presiding Officer

John Prinkki, District 3

Doug Tucker, District 1

## **Carbon County Planning Board**

David Alsager

Annette Anderson

Kathy Burgener

Mike Creeden

Pete Critelli

Diann Fischer-Larson

John Francis

Julie Jones, Chair

Gene Koch

Mike Shara

Growth Policy Prepared By:



CTA ARCHITECTS ENGINEERS

415 N. Broadway Ave

PO Box 268

Red Lodge, MT | 59068

brentm@ctagroup.com

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# 1

# INTRODUCTION

This plan expresses the citizen’s vision for sensible growth and development that preserves and enhances the community’s quality of life and rural character.

This growth policy is designed to provide decision makers with a resource for balancing diverse goals while creating a more vibrant, sustainable community. It is also the voice of local residents and formalizes how they want the County to grow in the near future.

This plan is intended to be easily understood by the local citizenry and used as an educational tool on the County’s broad land use issues and opportunities. It aims to simplify, clarify, and update previously compiled sections only when substantial shifts have occurred that necessitate revisions. It is a plan for the future while focusing primarily

on the physical and economic issues pertinent in our present economy. This can best be summarized with a quote from notable educator and business consultant, Peter Drucker:

“Long-range planning does not deal with future decisions, but with the future of present decisions.”

years. When Montana’s state planning statute was updated in 1999, the County followed suit by adopting a growth policy in 2003 and followed with an update in 2009. The terms growth policy and Comprehensive Plan can be used synonymously and both represent valuable tools for consensus-based policy planning and community development.

## Local Planning History

Carbon County’s first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1978 and operated as the community’s guiding document for over twenty

## Plan Approach and Methods

The first phase of plan development involved data collection, identifying local population and housing

This growth policy is:

- General and long-range
- Enabling for future public policy decisions
- Focused on physical and economic development
- Responsive to the community’s goals and objectives



outlooks, and an analysis of existing conditions. This included county-wide mapping relative to each plan topic to discover trends among the various communities.

Towards the end of this initial discovery phase, consultants completed a field survey of the primary transportation

corridors and the towns along those routes. These are the communities that experience the greatest impacts in terms of traffic and development. The field survey also represented the start of phase two: public engagement.

The second phase of plan development consisted of public

input opportunities spread across the County. This not only gave public officials and consultants invaluable guidance on citizen's preferences, but it was also informative for community members. The public came away from these discussions with a better understanding of the challenges

the County faces and vice versa. The process of gathering together to envision common goals and objectives is often more valuable than the planning document itself.

The final phase of plan development was publicizing the draft growth policy to gather final comments and feedback.



The Smith Mine Historical District near Washoe

# 2

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

Carbon County is an amenity-rich community situated along the base of the Beartooth Mountains. Its residents greatly value the resources that exist in the diverse landscape of the region.

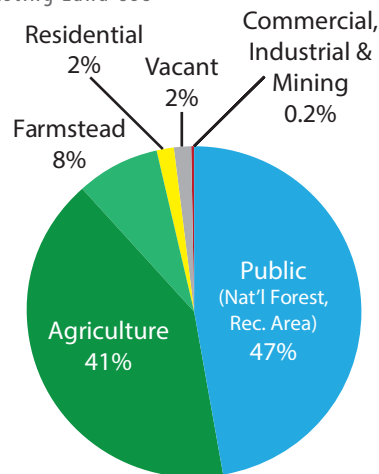
### Land Use

The majority of land in Carbon County (47%) is in public use by the Bureau of Land Management, State of Montana, National Park Service or other agencies. Various uses, including livestock grazing, recreation, logging or habitat conservation occur on these lands.

<i>Land Use</i>	<i>Approx. Acres</i>
Public	617,683
Agricultural	537,019
Farmstead	107,684
Residential	22,371
Vacant	20,218
Industrial	1,631
Commercial	662
Mining Claim	351
Utilities	81

About 41% of the county is used for agricultural activities, while about 8% is occupied by farmsteads. Residential land uses account for almost 2%, and 1.5% of county land is vacant. Industrial and commercial uses combine for about 2,300 acres, or about 0.2% of all county land.

Existing Land Use



### Land Ownership

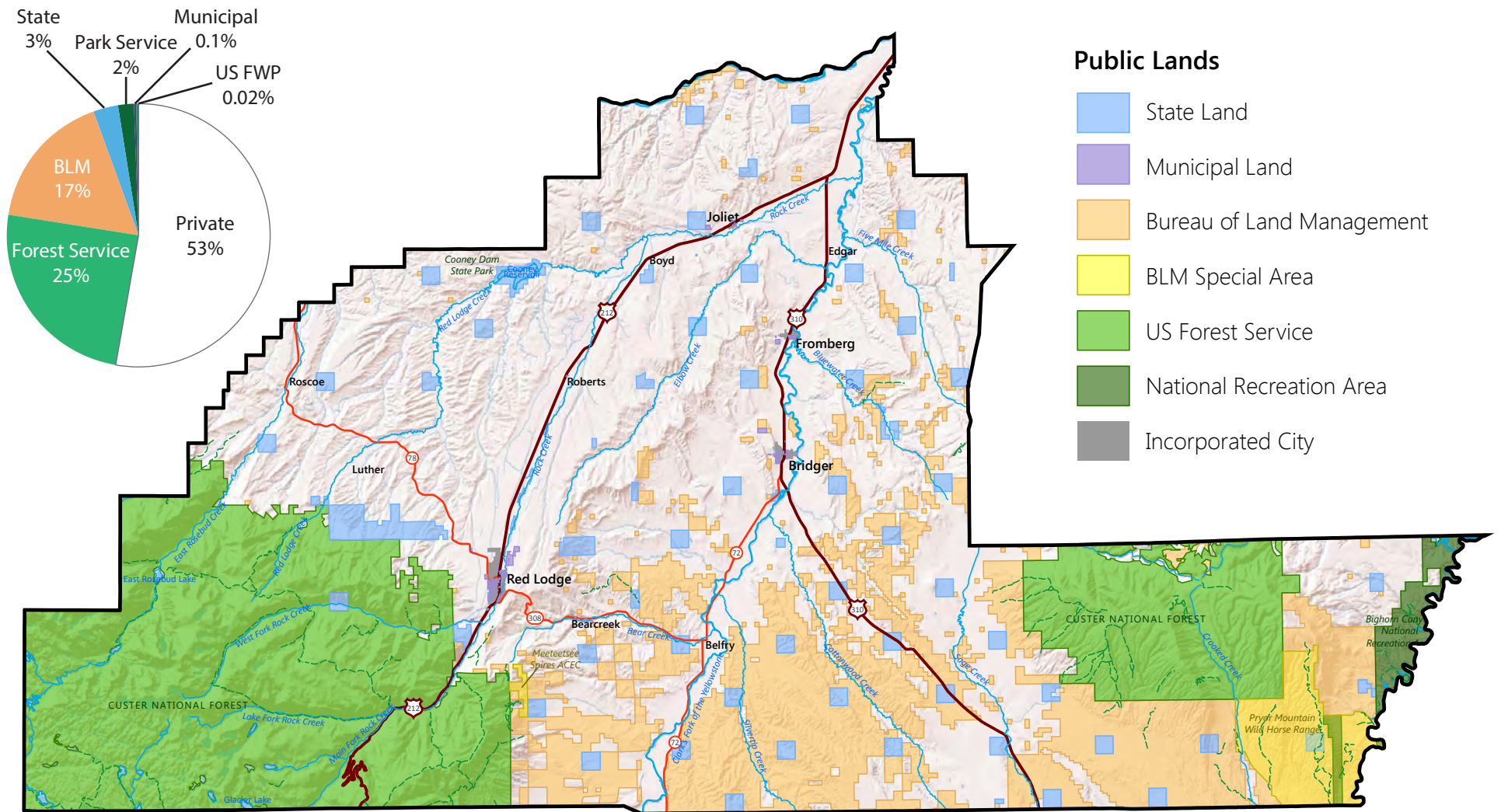
All of the land in the county was included in the Crow Reservation until 1877, when a small area around Red Lodge was withdrawn for coal development. In 1882 and 1892 agreements with the Crow Tribe opened additional lands for settlement. Carbon County was formed in 1895 from portions of Park and Yellowstone counties.

The lands now in private ownership passed at one time from federal ownership primarily by means of homestead and mineral entry. Approximately 53% of the county is privately-owned land.

<i>Existing Ownership</i>	<i>Approx. Acres</i>
Private	696,500
US Forest Service	325,600
Bureau of Land Management	226,150
State of Montana	42,140
National Park Service	22,300
Municipal	730
US Fish and Wildlife Service	270
Carbon County	130

Privately-owned lands in the county are generally situated along the Clarks Fork and Rock Creek Valley bottoms and in the north and northwest areas of the





Public and Private Land

county (Figure X). The lands in private ownership are generally lower in elevation, more level, drier, and have more productive soils than publicly owned lands.

Both the Custer and Gallatin

National Forests manage land in Carbon County. The majority of the land is managed by the Custer Forest. The Forest Service lands are concentrated in two blocks. The largest block is situated to the south, west

and northwest of Red Lodge, in the southwestern corner of the county. This block of forest land is high in elevation and rugged in character, containing a portion of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness

Area. Forest Plan management direction for land uses along the mountain front and wilderness area includes; grazing, wildlife habitat, water quality, multiple use, interpretation along the Beartooth Scenic Byway, and promoting the wild character.

The second block of National Forest lands are located on the southeast flank of the Pryor Mountains. The Forest Plan guidance on uses for the Pryor lands include; grazing, wildlife habitat, wood products, and recommended wilderness. The Forest Service lands are primarily managed from the Beartooth Ranger District located in Red Lodge.

#### Land Development Patterns

Platted subdivisions outside of incorporated places in the county cover approximately 12,000 acres. The county contains five incorporated cities and towns (Bearcreek, Bridger, Fromberg, Joliet, and Red Lodge) with an area of about 2,700 acres. There are also several unincorporated communities including Belfry, Boyd, Edgar, Luther, Roberts, Rockvale, Roscoe, and Silesia. The fact that most of the subdivided areas of the county,

approximately 80% of the land area, resides outside of an incorporated city or town gives the county a large role, and a responsibility in providing government services. A number of communities that once existed are no longer inhabited. These communities are listed in the history section of the county's 1986 comprehensive plan.

The dominant development pattern during the previous growth policy update was the widespread subdivision of land along Highway 212, largely between Red Lodge and Joliet. While now there are fewer large subdivisions, an emerging development pattern is the increasing use of divisions of land that are exempt from subdivision review. These are typically one-lot subdivisions that are dispersed throughout the county's sparsely populated areas.

The county planning board has representation from each of the five incorporated communities, the Conservation District, and a member representing each of the three commissioner districts in the county. When a subdivision application that does not meet the summary review provisions is received by the county, the county prepares a staff report and the county planning board holds a public hearing. The planning board then makes one of three possible recommendations to the commissioners, approve the preliminary plat, approve the preliminary plat with conditions, or deny the preliminary plat. Exempt subdivisions do not go before the Planning Board or County Commissioners and may be decided administratively by the Planning Director.

#### Farmland

The amount of land used for farming in 2012 was 791,295

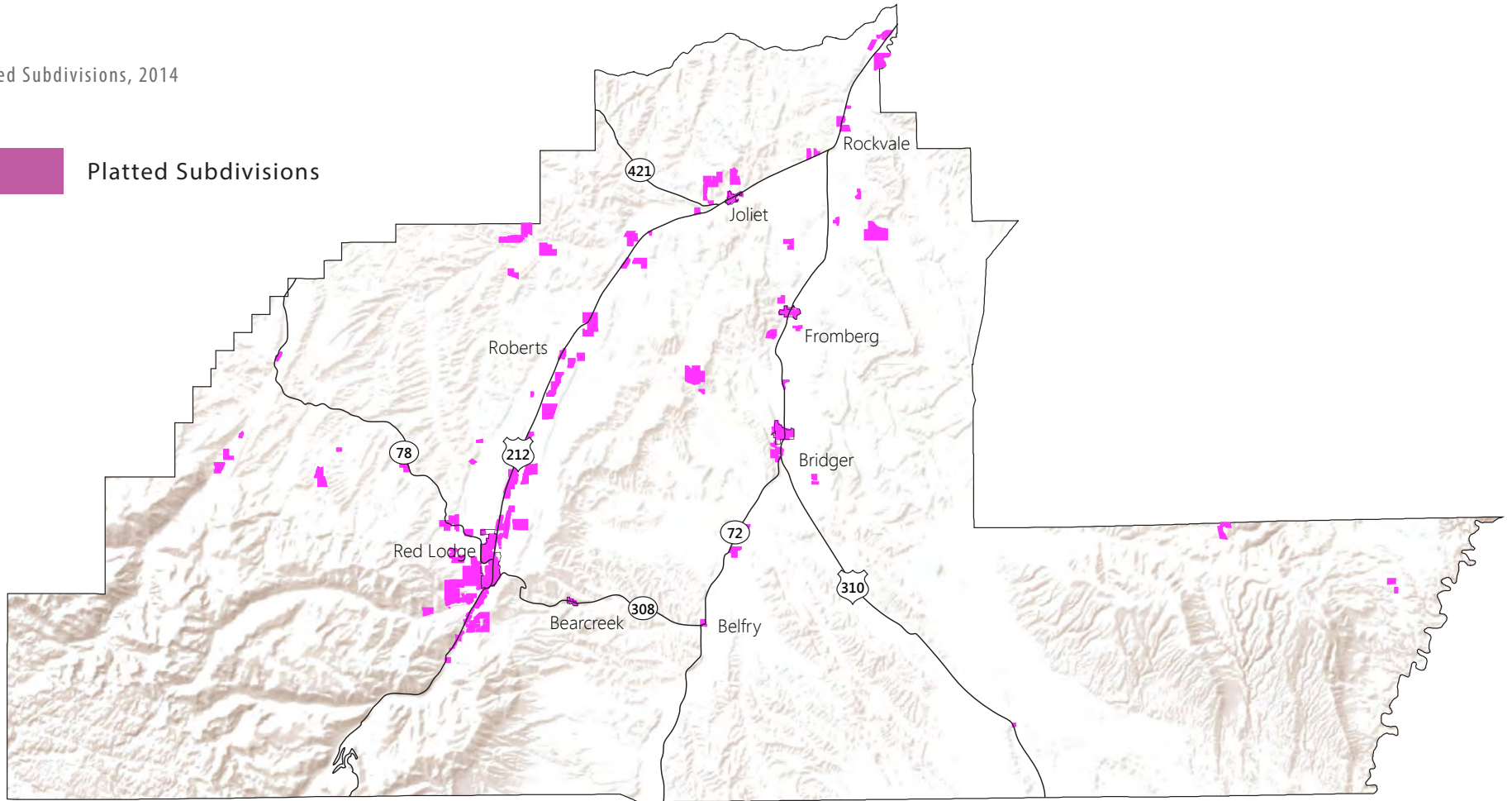
acres, with the county losing about 2,300 acres since 2007. While this is a small change, the number of farms has increased while the average size of farms has decreased. About 77% of land in farms was pastureland. Alfalfa and non-alfalfa hay are the most produced crops in the county as of 2013 combining for about 63% of total acres of crops planted. Barley was the third-most produced, with 12% of the total. Corn, sugarbeets, winter and spring wheat, dry beans and oats are other major crops, all combining for 19% of the total.

Geographically, the largest acreage of farmland is near the confluence of Rock Creek and the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone. Flat alluvial soils here provide ideal conditions for growing sugarbeets, corn, alfalfa and barley. Abundant farmland exists along the Clark's Fork valley, while some alfalfa and non-alfalfa hay is farmed in the Rock Creek valley. Most of the county is grass and shrubland.



Platted Subdivisions, 2014

 Platted Subdivisions



### Livestock and Ranching

The climate and topography of Carbon County is ideal for ranching and livestock production, which is a significant component of the

county's economy. Carbon County ranks 5th in the state for value of sales of horses, ponies, mules, burros and donkeys; 11th in the state for value of sheep goats, wool and mohair; and

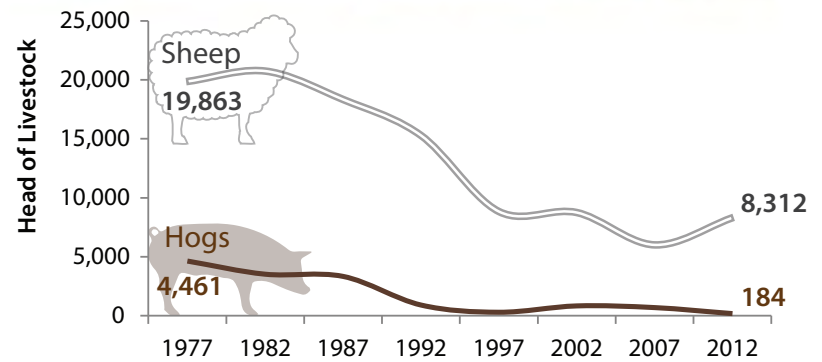
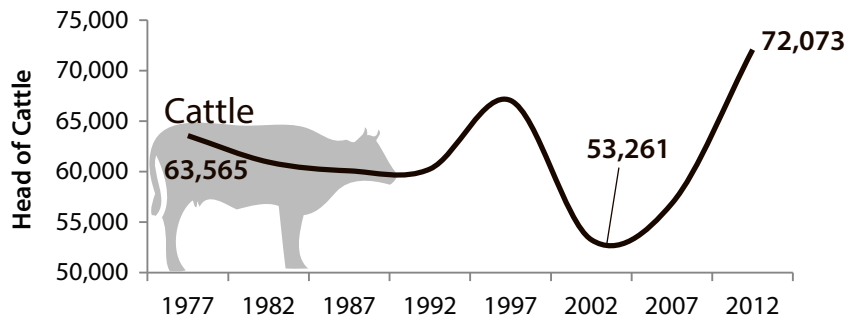
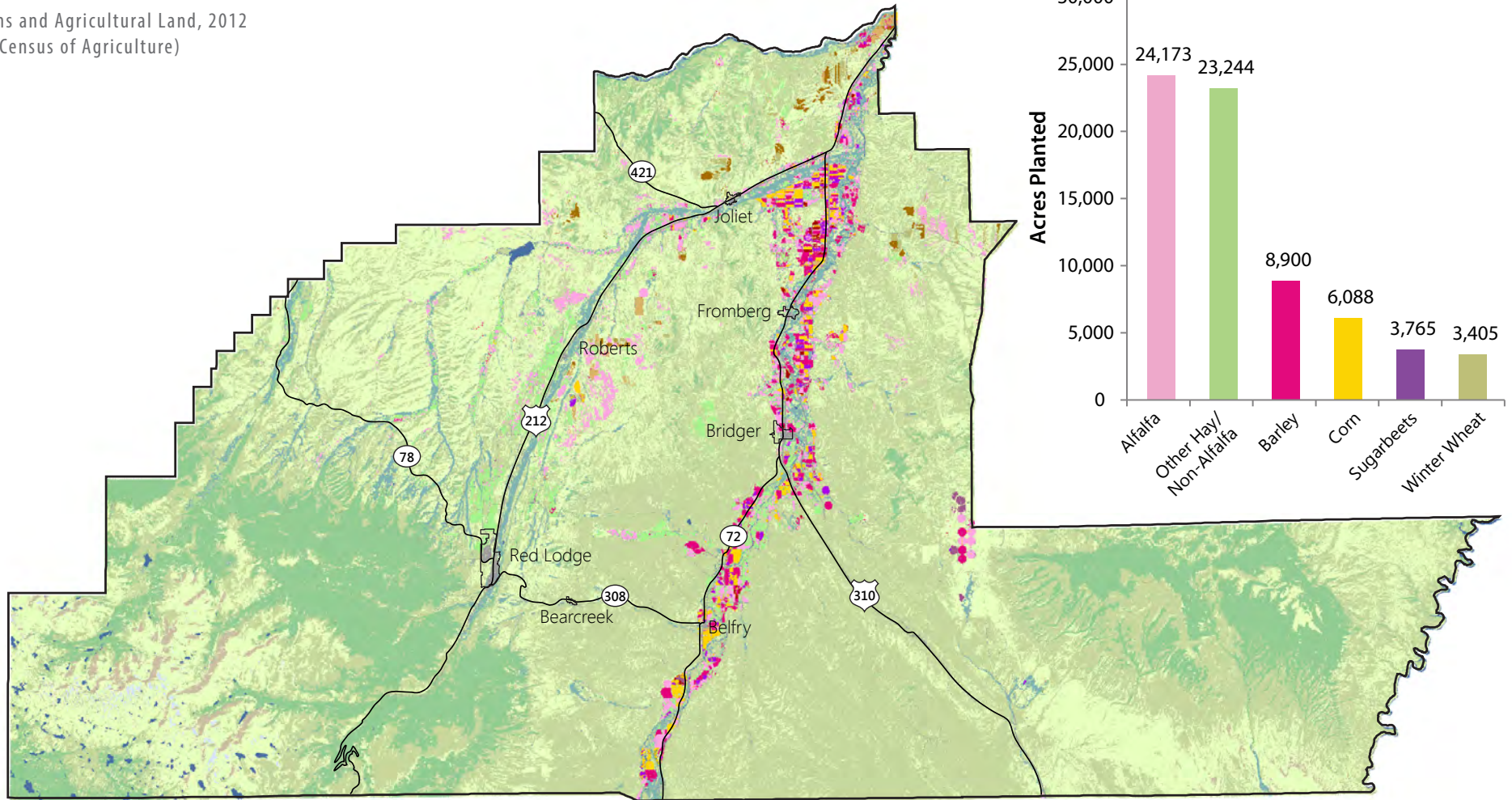
13th in the state for value of cattle.

Livestock production has fluctuated over the past 35 years, with number of cattle seeing the largest swings. Cattle

production was at a recent high in 2012 with 72,000 head. A historical low of 53,261 head of cattle was hit just ten years before.

Sheep and hogs have seen a historic decline since the 1970s, with sheep recently

Farms and Agricultural Land, 2012  
(US Census of Agriculture)





experiencing a resurgence back to 1997 levels (around 8,500 animals). Hog production has declined and remained low with only 184 animal units inventoried in the 2012 Agricultural Census.

### People

Carbon County's population growth has remained fairly stable in recent years despite the national recession and the community's semi-rural locale. Some cities and towns have declined and since stabilized, while Joliet stands out, seeing almost 9% growth in the last five years.

### Rural and Urban Population

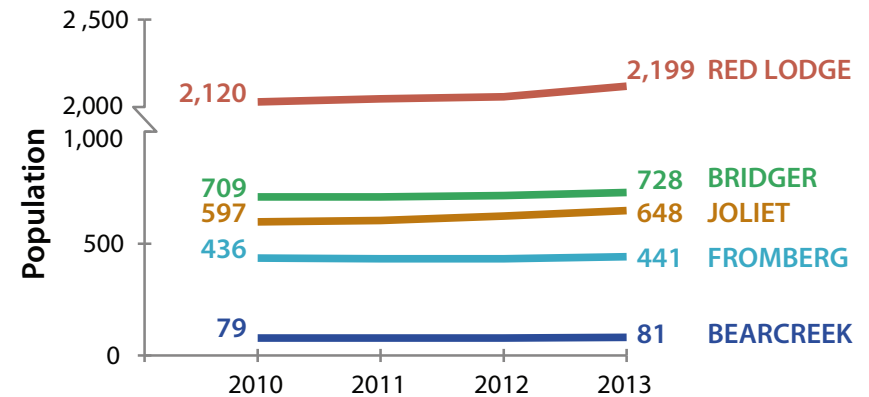
Since the 2009 update, the amount of people living in unincorporated rural areas has increased 18% while the overall population of incorporated

cities and towns has decreased by 8%, although both have seen growth in recent years.

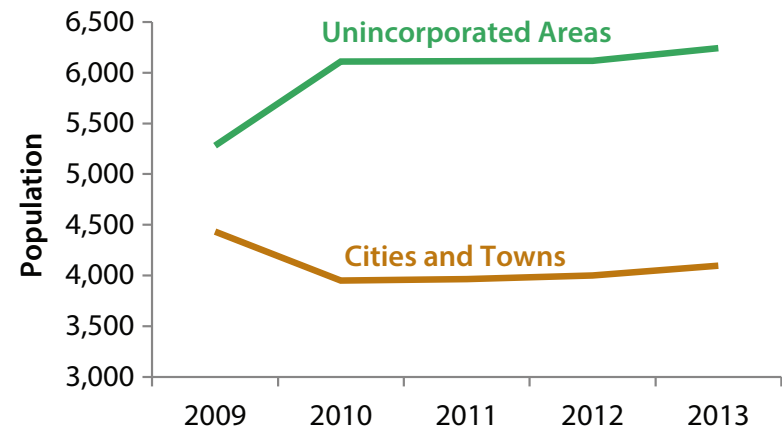
### Age and Gender

With a median age of 49.3 in 2013, Carbon County is by that measure almost ten years older than the rest of the state (39.8 years) and the US (37.6 years). The county's median family size of 2.85 also reflects the aging population when compared to the state (2.95), and the country (3.21), as older families generally do not have children in their households.

The age and gender composition is not unlike that of other rural communities in the state and country. An aging population is illustrated in the County's population pyramid by a "bulge" between the ages of 45 and 74. This represents the baby boom generation, who typically are still working



Population by Place, 2010 - 2013 (US Census Bureau)

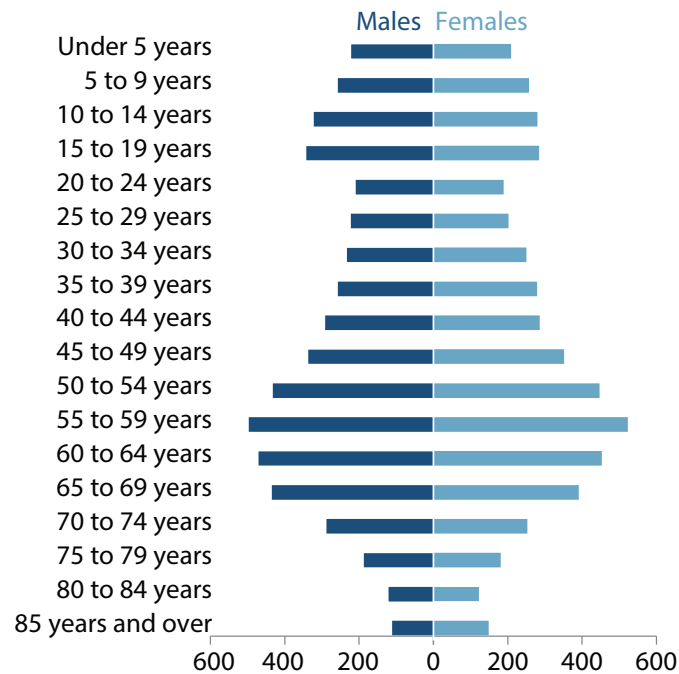


Urban and Rural Population, 2009 - 2013 (US Census Bureau)

or are near retirement. When this generation retires and ages, there will be a significant change in demand for jobs and healthcare.

A smaller bulge in school-aged children (ages 5 to 19 years) indicates a balance in the number of families and a potential younger workforce for

the county. Conversely, there is a gap between the ages of 19 and 25, most likely meaning that the county's youth are leaving after completing high school or turning 18 as they seek employment or education elsewhere in the state or region. This lack of working-aged youths could indicate job opportunities or education is lacking in Carbon County.



Carbon County Age and Gender Estimates, 2012 (US Census Bureau)

### Racial Composition

By 2012 estimates, the largest race in Carbon County is White at 95.7%, with Hispanic or Latino the second largest at about 2%. These figures similar to those found in the 2010 census. American Indian and Alaska Native is third at 1.1%, which is higher than in 2010 but much lower than the rest of the state (6%).

Race (2012 Estimates)	Percent
White	95.7%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	2.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native	1.1%
Asian	0.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
Black or African American	0.1%

### School Enrollment

The Montana Office of Public Instruction provides enrollment numbers for each school in the county. Since the 1990s, total enrollment has steadily declined, with the largest losses in elementary students. High school student enrollment has increased through the 2000s, while many small elementary and K-12 schools were annexed or became inactive.

### Population Projections

The 2009 growth policy utilized data from the Montana Department of Commerce's (MDOC) Census & Economic Information Center (CEIC), which projected growth for all Montana counties. The projection at that time was for Carbon County to gain about 870 people between 2000 and 2010, or a 9% increase. In reality, the county added 518 people, or grew about 5.5%.

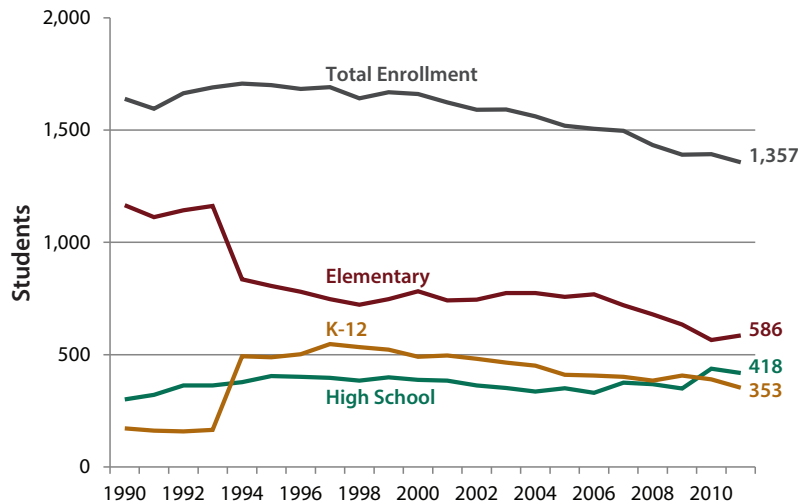
In 2013, the MDOC provided updated population projections



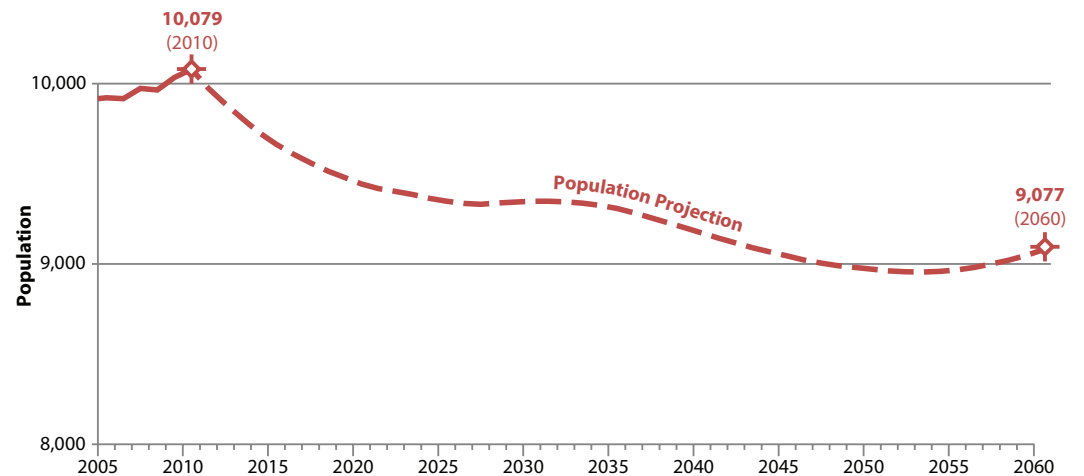
to the year 2060. The projection for Carbon County shows a steady decline after 2010, with the county stabilizing and again gaining population around 2055.

The data, provided by the CEIC and using dynamic prediction software from Regional Economic Modeling, Inc, project the county will lose about 1,000 in the 40-year span, despite recent population gain. These projections are highly

dependent on natural resource development in the county, which is highly unpredictable. Oil and gas development elsewhere in the state makes projecting population more complex, as it sways migration patterns within Montana.



School Enrollment, 1990 - 2012, (US Census Bureau)



Population Projections 2010 - 2060, (MT Dept. of Commerce)

## Housing

Estimates from 2012 indicate there were 6,424 housing units in Carbon County, up from 5,461 in 2005. A Housing Plan was developed in 2009 to inventory housing stock and to understand trends and issues in an effort to address needs. Housing trends at that time were driven by migration from Clarks Fork valley communities to Red Lodge, Joliet and other places along the Highway 212 corridor. This left vacant, underutilized and unsound homes in cities and towns in the Clarks Fork valley.

Many of the same issues of housing cost, condition and supply remain. As the population grows in every community in the county, demand for quality and affordable housing will increase.

The 2012 Census ACS provides estimates on the value, condition, supply and ownership of housing units.

## Value

Median home value in Carbon County in 2012 was estimated at \$196,800, much higher than the median home value in the state (\$183,000) and the US (\$181,400). Seventy-three percent of housing is owner-occupied. In Carbon County, over half (55%) of owned housing units had a mortgage, with median monthly owner costs being \$1,180.

Median rent in the county was \$700, which is higher than the state median (\$667) but lower than the US (\$889).

## Age and Condition

Most of the county's towns and cities developed in the late 19th and early 20th century, so there is no surprise that 32% of housing units in the county were built before 1939. A small building boom occurred in the 1970s. The most recent peak building decade was the 1990s

when about 1,000 new units were constructed. The national housing boom of the 2000s is reflected in the 781 new units built in that decade, however there has been a significant slow down in new home construction since 2010.

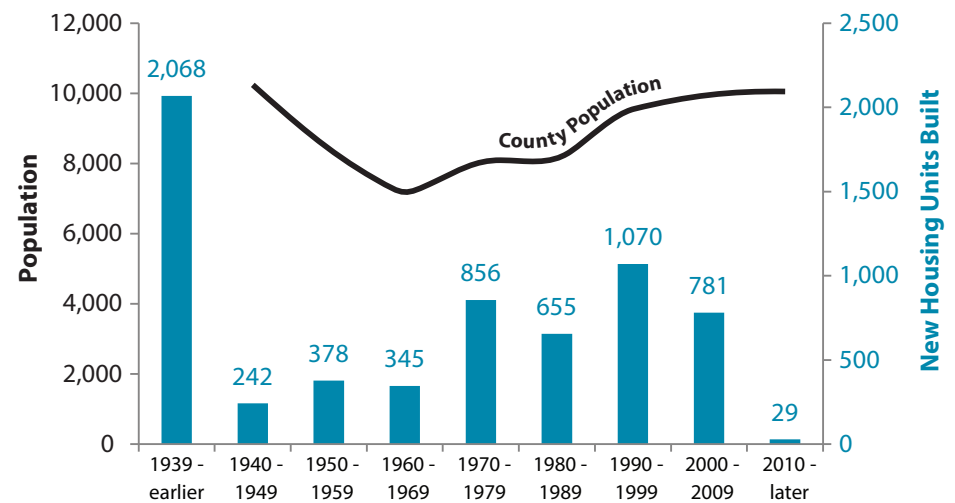
Forty-nine occupied housing units lacked complete plumbing facilities, 66 units lacked complete kitchens and 52 units had no telephone service.

Many of Carbon County's citizens are new residents. Of

all current householders, 45% moved into their home in the 2000s, and 25% moved in during the 1990s. Twenty-three percent of householders moved in before 1989. From 2010 to 2012, 321 new householders moved into their Carbon County home. The peak migration occurred just after the peak in new unit construction.

## Composition

Of all housing units, 38% were three bedroom houses, 29% had two bedrooms and 14% had



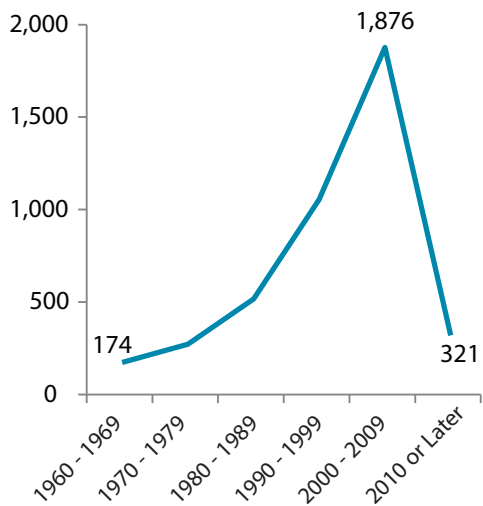
New Units and Population in Carbon County 1939 - 2010, (US Census Bureau)



four bedrooms. One bedroom houses are more prevalent in Carbon County than the state or country, while large houses (five bedrooms or more) were slightly less prevalent than the state.

Carbon County's homes have many more cars per house than the state with 41% having three or more vehicles. Statewide this figure is 29% and only 20% of US homes have three or more vehicles available.

Almost all of the county's housing units (98.8%) had



Year Householder Moved Into Unit, Carbon County 1950 - 2010, (US Census Bureau)

one occupant per room. This indicates low density housing and a probable lack of multiple family dwellings.

#### Demand

A simple calculation of the numbers of households compared to the number of housing units produces an estimate of housing availability or vacancy rate. In 2010, there were an estimated 4,571 households and an estimated supply of 6,441 units. Of these, 1,870 units were vacant. Seasonal or occasional use accounts for 21% of vacant units and 2% were rentals.

A "household" consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit including the related family members and all the unrelated people who share the housing unit. The average number of persons per household is 2.19, lower than the state average. This is likely due to the large percent of seasonal/vacation homes in the county.

## Economy

### Sectors and Jobs

In 2012, the US Bureau of Economic Analysis reported there were 5,156 jobs in Carbon County, down 4.7% from the recent peak in 2007, but up 3.6% from 2002. The county's economy is evenly distributed among sectors, with management and administration (including government services)

being the largest, supporting 19% of all jobs. Recreation and hospitality is the second largest (17%), showing the importance of tourism for the local economy. Manufacturing, wholesale and transportation is the third largest sector, with 16% of all jobs.

The economy has been shifting away from agriculture, manufacturing and retail into the professional, financial and

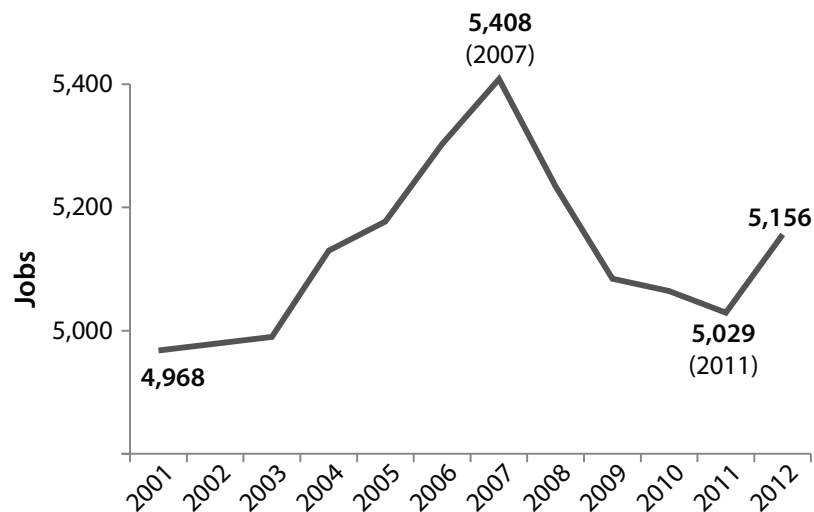
management sectors. Since 2001, the agriculture and natural resources sector experienced the greatest reduction, losing 191 jobs. Retail experienced a 17% reduction, losing 90 jobs. At 31% growth, the financial and professional sector expanded the most, adding 121 jobs. Recreation and hospitality grew the second most, adding 94 jobs over the 11-year period.

Of all workers living in Carbon County, almost 70% commute to jobs outside the county. About 1,260 people are employed in Carbon County but live outside the county. The top work destination for employees living in the county is Billings (27% of all jobs), followed by Red Lodge (17%), Laurel (3.4%), Bozeman (2.6%), and Joliet (2.3%).

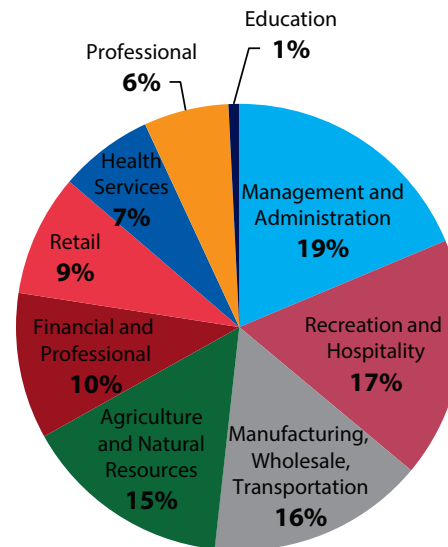
The large majority of commuters, 64%, drive alone to work in a car, truck or van. Thirteen percent carpool while 9.5% walked and 1.4% take public transit. Nine percent of workers 16 years and older work at home. Average commute time is 26 minutes, much longer than the state average of 18 minutes.

### Employers

The top private employers in the county are as follows (by size class then by alphabetical listing as provided by the Montana Department of Labor and Industry - 2nd Quarter 2011).



Number of Jobs in Carbon County, 2001 - 2012 (US Census Bureau)



Economic Sectors, 2012 (US Census Bureau)

Top County Employers 2013  
(MT Dept of Labor and Industry)

Employer	Size Class*
Beartooth Hospital & Health Center	6
Red Lodge Mountain Resort	6
Pollard Hotel	5
Red Lodge Pizza Company	5
Rock Creek Resort	5
Bank of Bridger	4
Beartooth Food Farm	4
Beartooth Industries	4
Cedar Wood Villa	4
Town & Country Supply	4

\*Size Class Breakdown:

Size Class 4 = 20-49 employees;

Size Class 5 = 50-99 employees;

Size Class 6 = 100-249 employees.

Does not include government or tribal employers.

### Income and Wages

Although employment is an important measure of economic activity, it does not tell the whole story. The health of the economy depends upon the vitality of industries that bring

income into the area. Most often, these “basic” industries bring in revenues by “exporting” products or services. These exports can be manufactured goods, financial services, technology services, or any other number of activities that go far beyond the traditional sectors of mining, agriculture, and forest product industries that have been referred to as the “three-legged stool” or foundation of Montana’s economy. In addition to basic industries, other activities such as retirees living off their domestic stock portfolios also bring basic income into the area.

### Personal Income, 2010 -2012 (US Census Bureau)

Income Category	2010	2012	% Change
Personal Income (Thousands of Dollars)	\$340,837	\$392,102	15%
Nonfarm Personal Income	\$341,997	\$389,201	14%
Farm Income	-\$1,160	\$2,901	150%
Per Capita Personal Income (Dollars)	\$33,857	\$38,718	14%

Since 2010, personal income strongly increased for both farm and nonfarm categories, with farm income resurging back into positive figures after seeing net losses. Total personal income is up 15% while per capita personal income increased \$4,891 over the two-year period.

Median household income in the county is estimated at \$47,030, slightly higher than the state median of \$45,456. Average household income is \$59,804, indicating the top half of workers are earning disproportionately more than bottom half. An estimated

22% of workers earn between \$50,000 and \$74,999.

A US Census survey from 2012 estimates about 1,500 households with earnings are receiving supplemental social assistance of some kind. About 17% of households with earnings are receiving retirement income. The county’s unemployment rate for the population 16 years and older is 2.3%, lower than the state rate of 4.5%, and significantly lower than the national rate in 2012 (5.9%).



## Public Services

### Local Government

The Carbon County government consists of a three-member commission. Each commissioner represents one of three districts in the county, serves a six-year term, and is elected by all of the electors of the county. The commission elects a chair from among their members annually. In addition to the commission, there are seven other elected positions; Treasurer, Assessor, Clerk, Sheriff, Clerk of District Court, County Attorney, and County Superintendent.

Carbon County is home to five incorporated communities. Four of these communities are classified as towns, Bearcreek, Bridger, Fromberg, and Joliet. Red Lodge is a city. All of the municipalities in the county have commission-executive forms of government (mayor and council.) Bearcreek and Joliet have general powers. Bridger

has self-governing powers and a charter.

### Planning and Sanitation

The Planning and Sanitation Office was staffed and operated as one department until 2012, when those services were contracted to private consultants.

The planning services provided by the office include; assisting the public and developers in understanding the rules and regulations, subdivision review, survey review, comprehensive planning, floodplain administration and providing support to the planning board. The sanitation services provided include; food service inspections for the approximately 300 restaurants, tourist homes, bed and breakfasts, and bars, inspection of septic system construction and installation, approving plans and issuing septic permits, advising the Board of Health,

and administration services in support of the Board of Health.

The planning services are funded by a combination of subdivision review fees, some state reimbursement, and the taxpayer supported general fund. Grants have been obtained for comprehensive planning. The sanitation services are funded by a combination of permit fees and state reimbursement.

### Law Enforcement

The Carbon County Sheriff has responsibility for the county-wide dispatch system, coroner duties, and the search and rescue program. The county enforcement staff includes the Sheriff, Undersheriff, Lieutenant, Sargent, and five deputies. Dispatch staff includes the head dispatcher and six full-time dispatchers. The county has a reserve deputy program with 18 individuals currently certified. The sheriff also serves as the

County Coroner. The sheriff/coroner estimates that there are approximately 50 unattended deaths per year in the county.

The county search and rescue (SAR) program is comprised entirely of volunteers. There are **25 trained volunteers**, half of whom are active. Carbon County Search and Rescue averages roughly 30 calls annually and is working with the ambulance service to integrate advanced life support medical care into the program.

Funding for the programs under the sheriff which includes law enforcement, coroner services, and search and rescue has been relatively stable despite the increasing demands of a growing population.

The sheriff's overarching administrative issue is how to provide services to an increasing population under a stable budget scenario. Rural residents' expectations for response are

high, and an increasing number of special promotional events drawing visitors consume more and more patrol staff time.

### Fire Protection

The county is divided into nine fire districts. From outside the county, Laurel provides fire protection on the Whitehorse Bench area in the north end of the county, and Absarokee provides fire protection for the Roscoe area.

Funding for the departments comes from a variety of sources including the county, fund raisers, donations, grants, special contracts and wildland fire tours with local apparatus.

Carbon County adopted Resolution 2007-10 as authorized under 76-6-1604, MCA which established a Fire Impact Fee in the amount of \$1000 for all new construction of dwellings/commercial buildings within the Red Lodge

Rural Fire District. The purpose of the Impact Fee is to offset the effects of rapid growth, which has outpaced the ability of the District to maintain adequate levels of service.

Issues of concern to the rural fire chiefs are the tax structure to fund operations and apparatus (new fire trucks cost approximately \$250,000), attracting and retaining volunteers, the county radio system, water supply, funds to purchase personal protective equipment, and the lack of accurate maps. The number of new subdivisions and lots approved which require fire protection is also a concern.

### Delinieiating the Wildland Urban Interface

Home construction in or near forested areas has been increasing over the last 30 years. These areas have been named Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). According to one study, it is

estimated that WUI covered 9% of all land area in the U.S. and as many as 39% of all structures are in WUI. Wildfires in the WUI can provide unique challenges for firefighters. By delineating the WUI, fire managers and the public can better prepare for these challenges. For instance, structures located in the designated WUI area can have home assessments completed to help the owner better understand specific risks. See the 2012 Community Wildfire Protection Plan for additional information on the county's significant wildland-urban interface issues.

### Ambulance

Three ambulance services cover Carbon County, each one working in a different geographical area. Red Lodge Ambulance is housed in Red Lodge at the District VII fire station and covers all of Rural Fire District #7 and the southern

portion of Rural Fire District #6. The areas covered include Red Lodge, Bear Creek, Roberts, Luther and Roscoe. The Red Lodge service also covers Beartooth Pass and Scenic Highway to the Wyoming border.

The City of Red Lodge employs four full time firefighter/paramedics who assist the Fire Chief in the administration of the Fire Department and emergency medical service. Some of the paramedics have additional training to the Critical Care Paramedic level. The service has between 20 and 50 volunteer emergency medical technicians trained to various levels.

Joilet Ambulance covers an area from north of Roberts to South White Horse Bench Road, Joliet, Edgar, Silesia, and the Cooney Reservoir area. The service is funded by user fees and donations.

The Clarks Fork Valley Ambulance covers approximately 750 sq. miles. The service is supported by user fees, annual donations, and \$10,000 per year from Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) receipts.

#### Disaster and Emergency Services

The county has a part-time Disaster Emergency Services (DES) Coordinator located in the Carbon County Administration building in Red Lodge. The DES program is funded primarily by the state. The county has an active Local Emergency Planning Committee or LEPC. The county completed an Emergency Operations Plan in 2004 to address earthquakes, hazardous materials, dam failure/flooding, national emergency, forest/range fire, mass casualty accidents, and volcanic ash.

#### Health Care and Child Care

The county has four clinics and one hospital (Figure

4). Billings Clinic is located in Red Lodge and has three general practitioners and four registered nurses. The Billings Clinic is affiliated with Billings Clinic Hospital in Billings. The Mountain View clinic, affiliated with St. Vincent's Healthcare in Billings, also located in Red Lodge has two general practitioners, two registered nurses, and administrative staff. The Clarks Fork Medical Center, located in Bridger is operated by Riverstone Health based in Billings, and staffed by a nurse practitioner, nurse, and administrative staff. Riverstone also offers a clinic in Joliet. The clinics in Red Lodge regularly host visiting specialists from the larger area.

Beartooth Hospital and Health Center, a 22-bed facility, is located in Red Lodge and is affiliated with Billings Clinic. Beartooth Hospital and Health Center also operates the Children's Center in Red

Lodge. The Children's Center can accommodate up to approximately 100 children.

There are two dentists in the county, both located in Red Lodge. Dental care is also available in Laurel and Billings. An optometrist from an eye clinic in Billings sees patients one day per week in Red Lodge.

Mental health care is provided in Red Lodge by two therapists in a satellite office of the Mental Health Center of Billings. One of the two therapists works full-time in chemical dependence. The other therapist works one-half to three-quarters time in general counseling. An estimated 200 cases annually are handled by the two therapists.

There are three nursing home/assisted living facilities in the county. Cedar Wood Villa Nursing home is a 76-bed home located in Red Lodge. Cedar Wood Villa reports an approximate occupancy of

75%. St. John's Lutheran Homes constructed a nursing home near the campus of the hospital.

Senior services are provided by the Belfry Senior Citizens Center, the Golden Age Society in Bridger, the Joliet XYZ'ers, the Valley Senior Citizens Center in Fromberg, and the Red Lodge/Roberts Senior Center in Red Lodge.

Beartooth Hospital and Healthcare employs the county's Public Nurse and is situated in the county building in Carbon County Annex building in Red Lodge. The nurse also visits Bridger, Roberts, and Red Lodge.

The State of Montana Quality Assurance Division currently has seven licensed day care operators in the county. Group facilities can handle up to 12 children, family facilities can handle up to six. There are five group facilities located in Joliet, Fromberg, Bridger, Red Lodge, and Red Lodge Mountain. There



are two family operators, one in Red Lodge and one in Joliet.

### Public Assistance

The Department of Public Health and Human Services Office of Public Assistance is located in the courthouse annex in Red Lodge. The public assistance office administers local financial assistance programs including Pathways, Medical Assistance (Medicaid and medical assistance for medically needy), the CHIP program (Childrens' Health Insurance Program), food stamp eligibility, and the local food bank. The Office of Public Assistance is operated and funded by the state of Montana.

### Library Services

There are three public libraries in the county. They are located in Red Lodge, Bridger, and Joliet. The Carnegie Library in Red Lodge, built in 1919, is operated by the city and staffed by one full-time librarian and one

part-time assistant. The Bridger library is located in an old schoolhouse and staffed by one part-time employee. The Joliet library, located in the school, is staffed by a full-time librarian. The county assists in supporting each of the libraries and as a result, there are no fees for using the libraries in the county.

### County Attorney

The county attorney is a full-time elected position located in Red Lodge. The county attorney is elected for a four-year term. The office is staffed by the attorney, a deputy attorney, and full-time assistant. Additional legal assistance is contracted as needed.

### Utilities: Electricity

Electricity is provided to county residents by the Beartooth Electric Cooperative, Northwestern Energy (NWE), and the Yellowstone Valley Cooperative. Beartooth Electric serves approximately 2,450 customers in the county. Beartooth Electric customers are located outside incorporated communities, and in the unincorporated communities of Roscoe, Luther, Roberts, and East Rosebud. The customer base of the cooperative has recently been growing by approximately 200-250 new users per year.

Northwestern Energy provides electricity to Edgar, Fromberg, Bridger, Belfry, Bear Creek, Red Lodge, Joliet, and a small number of rural customers adjacent to the communities. The company serves approximately 4200 residential and commercial accounts in the county. Yellowstone Valley

Electric Cooperative provides electricity to the northern end of Carbon County.

### Natural Gas

Northwestern Energy (NWE) and Montana Dakota Utilities provide the natural gas in Carbon County. Natural gas is not available everywhere. Montana Dakota Utilities (MDU) provides natural gas to Warren, Belfry, Bridger, Fromberg, Edgar, Silesia, Rockvale, and Joliet.

NWE provides gas to Roberts, Red Lodge, the Roscoe area, and one ranch in Belfry. NWE currently produces its own gas and provides natural gas to approximately 1900 residential and commercial accounts in the county. The utility will extend gas service to new customers willing to pay for installation of infrastructure.

### Telephone

Local telephone service in Carbon County is provided by

Qwest and Project Telephone. Project Telephone provides services to Belfry, Roscoe and East Rosebud. The rest of the county is served by Qwest. Numerous long distance carriers are available for selection by customers. Bridger, Joliet, Fromberg, and Red Lodge are located within the Billings local calling area. Calls made between these towns, and to Billings, Hardin, Laurel, and Columbus are local. Belfry and Roscoe are not within the Billings local area.

AT&T and Verizon provide cellular services across the county. The digital signals require line of sight technology and closer tower intervals.

There has been a large increase in the construction for cell phone towers that can accommodate newer and faster communication technology. Several additional towers are being erected in the county,

particularly in rural areas such as Cooney Reservoir and Roscoe. New towers may constitute a land use change, which requires a county development permit. Before a development permit is approved, the tower applicant must receive all state and federal approvals including environmental and visual impact assessments. New towers require state building permits. Concerns have been raised regarding the increased visual impacts near scenic areas.

### Internet

Internet services and cable are provided by a number of Billings and national companies. With the exception of Red Lodge, internet providers have been unwilling to invest in the infrastructure necessary to provide this service for the potential number of paying users.

### Cable Television

Cable Montana located in Laurel provides cable service to the City of Red Lodge. Bridger and Joliet each have local cable television. Rural areas are not served by wire services due to the infrastructure costs per the number of customers. Many residents in rural areas obtain satellite services.

### **Public Facilities**

#### Roads and Highways

The streets and highways in Carbon County are constructed and maintained by a combination of municipalities, the county, the state, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and private homeowners' associations. The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) maintains 23.9 miles of state secondary highway and approximately 153 miles of primary state highway in the county. A primary

highway is a major arterial connecting with a federal highway. A secondary highway is a farm-to-market road that connects to a state highway.

Average Annual Daily Traffic, Carbon County 1999 - 2011 (MDOT)

Highway	Location	Average Daily Traffic (1999)	Average Daily Traffic (2011)
72	Between Bridger and Belfry	1,400	1,664
78	Between Red Lodge and Roscoe	836	916
212	Between the Yellowstone/Carbon County line and Rockvale	5,375	8,282
212	Between Joliet and Red Lodge	2,193	2,794
212	Between Red Lodge and the Wyoming line (averaged over 12 months)	755	953
308	Between Belfry and Red Lodge	889	975
310	Between Bridger and the Wyoming line	1,314	1,665
310	Between Rockvale and Fromberg	N/A	3,783

As shown in the above table, traffic has been steadily increasing on all the county's state highways since the 1990s. The biggest increases in average daily flows have occurred on Highway 212 from the Yellowstone/Carbon county line

to Rockvale. Almost 3,000 more vehicles travel on this route on average every day. Highway 212 between Joliet and Red Lodge has also seen much higher

traffic flows. The Beartooth Pass, although only open seasonally, saw a 27% increase in average daily traffic in the twelve-year period. Traffic on Highways 78 and 308 saw modest increases of around 10%.



Project	Location	Construction Dates
US Hwy 212 Reconstruction	Rockvale to Laurel	2013-2016 or beyond
MT Hwy 78 Red Lodge Northwest	MT Hwy 78 milepost 0 to milepost 5.1	2014-2015
West Fork Road	US Hwy 212 and West Fork Rd intersection to Ski Run Road	2015-2016

Several highway and county road construction and improvement projects are scheduled over the next few years. The largest is the reconstruction of US Highway 212 between Rockvale and Laurel. This project consists of a new four-lane divided roadway with depressed median with a new alignment on the west bench. An overpass at the railroad crossing south of Laurel is currently being constructed.

#### County Roads

Carbon County is responsible for 900+ miles of roads and bridges. Each of the three commissioners oversees the road work for his district within the county and

the work is done out of three county shops located in Joliet, Red Lodge, and Bridger, by a total of 16 full-time employees. The county completes one major bridge replacement approximately every five years.

#### Other Roads

The Custer National Forest and BLM both maintain road systems in the county. The Custer Forest maintains approximately 300 miles of roads in Carbon County. These roads and the roads on BLM lands provide access for public and administrative uses. There are no roads in the wilderness area.

New subdivisions, especially major subdivision often

have their own internal road systems. The county does not accept responsibility of new road systems, but requires that provisions for maintenance of the roads be in place through an appropriate mechanism such as a Homeowners' Association. Roads within subdivisions must be constructed to the appropriate county standard to assure residents' safety and emergency vehicle access. On infrequent occasions, the county has been asked to intervene in disputes over road construction and/or maintenance within subdivisions.

#### Air Transportation

There are two public-use airports in Carbon County. Red Lodge has an airstrip located on the west bench above the city. Aviation fuel is available at Red Lodge. The Red Lodge strip is 4000 feet in length, paved, and has a small crosswind runway. The present airport no

longer meets Federal Aviation Administration standards and is ineligible for federal financial assistance.

Bridger has a paved 3400-foot airstrip on the west edge of town. This runway can accommodate large twin engine planes. There is no instrumentation at Bridger. Aviation fuel is not available, nor is there a fixed-base operator. In addition to the two public airports in Carbon County, there are approximately 14 private-use airstrips primarily used to support ranching operations.

#### Rail Transportation

Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and Montana Rail Link operate in the County. BNSF owns and maintains 50 miles of mainline and nine miles of yard track in Carbon County. The rail line runs east of and parallel to Highway 212 from Laurel south to the junction with Highway 310 then on to Bridger. From

Bridger the line leaves the river bottom and follows Highway 310 south into Wyoming. In any given 24-hour period, 10-12 trains cross the county traveling between Laurel and Denver.

### Public Water Systems

The city of Red Lodge, the towns of Bridger, Joliet, Fromberg, Bearcreek, and the communities of Belfry and Roberts all have public water systems, and all have adopted hook-up fees. The incorporated municipalities do their own administration of the systems such as planning for and financing improvements, setting base rates and hook-up fees, and billing. Red Lodge, Roberts, and Joliet meter their water. Bearcreek, Belfry, Bridger, and Joliet have had to institute water rationing in the summer months.

The State Department of Revenue and the county cooperatively assist the rural water districts by assessing

users on their property taxes once a year in Edgar, Belfry and Roberts. The local districts handle the collection of hook-up fees and other local administrative issues.

Water system operators and water district board members report concerns with meeting a new state requirement for having licensed operators, and also the day-to-day management of protecting the infrastructure. There are a number of private water systems serving subdivisions, campgrounds, and mobile home parks. The owners of these private systems are responsible for testing water quality and submitting results to the state and county sanitarian.

Most of the rural residents obtain their domestic water from individual wells although a few obtain water from springs. There have no known occurrences of contaminated groundwater affecting individual

wells where the wells were properly installed. Although Joliet has submitted a wellhead protection study to the Montana DEQ, none of the communities in the county have approved wellhead protection plans.

### Waste Water Systems

Rural residents in the county have individual septic systems. All systems installed since 1968 are required to have a county septic permit. Most of the rural systems are standard gravity septic tank and drainfield systems. In areas where groundwater is too high or percolation too rapid, there are systems with shallow-capped drainfields or sand-lined trenches. County residents have recently raised concerns about the potential for future groundwater contamination associated with major subdivisions that may have 40 or more individual septic systems.

The incorporated places have

the following systems, in addition, Belfry, Edgar, and Roberts have sewer districts which operate community waste water systems.

Fromberg and Bridger are permitted to discharge from their waster water facilities into the Clarks Forks River while Joliet and Red Lodge are permitted to discharge into Rock Creek. Several entities in the county are considering raising either base rates, hook-up charges, or both to finance needed maintenance and improvements. Edgar reports problems with unauthorized hook-ups.

### Solid Waste

Solid waste collection for the entire county is provided by Allied Waste Systems (AWS) headquartered in Billings. AWS has waste collection contracts with the City of Red Lodge and the Towns of Bridger and Joliet. There are various issues with

the waste generated by rural residents and especially second home owners.

The City of Billings owns and operates the sanitary landfill in which all of the waste generated in Carbon County is disposed. The city has 700 acres set aside for its landfill, 280 of which are currently under permit with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. The permit is in effect until the acres under permit are filled with waste.

The City of Billings has separate annual agreements for waste disposal with Carbon County, the City of Red Lodge, and the Towns of Bridger, Fromberg, and Joliet. All remaining landfills in Carbon County were closed in the 1990s.

Joliet, Bridger, and Red Lodge participate in voluntary recycling programs initiated by the communities. Red Lodge has a recycling facility open

two days a week. AWS hauls the recyclable materials to Billings without charge and processes the materials.

## **Natural Resources**

### Soil Resources

In 1975, the U.S.D.A. and the Forest Service in cooperation with the Montana Agricultural Experimental Station published a Soil Survey for the Carbon County Area Montana. The survey stated: "The soils of Carbon County can generally be described in five separate geographic areas, each having unique landscape-soil relationships" (Carbon County General Resource Assessment, NRCS, 1999). Detailed surveys completed as recently as 2003 in the NRCS Soil Survey Geographic Database (SSURGO), the most-detailed county-level digital soil database, provide large-scale soil unit boundaries for Carbon County (See Map X). The survey identifies 178 soil

types, with four major types prevalent across the county: wet silty clay loams, silty clay loams, fine sandy loams and extremely stony loams. Southwestern Carbon County (Beartooth-Absaroka Wilderness) was not included in the survey.

### Mineral Resources

There are approximately 18 gravel mining operations in Carbon County.

These are located generally along major highway corridors throughout the county, with most along the State Highway 78 and US Highway 212 corridors.

Gravels generally suitable for construction uses are found throughout the county in the alluvium and alluvial terraces. Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology maps showing the locations of these formations — specifically Quaternary Alluvial Terraces (Qat), Quaternary Pediment Gravels (Qpg), and

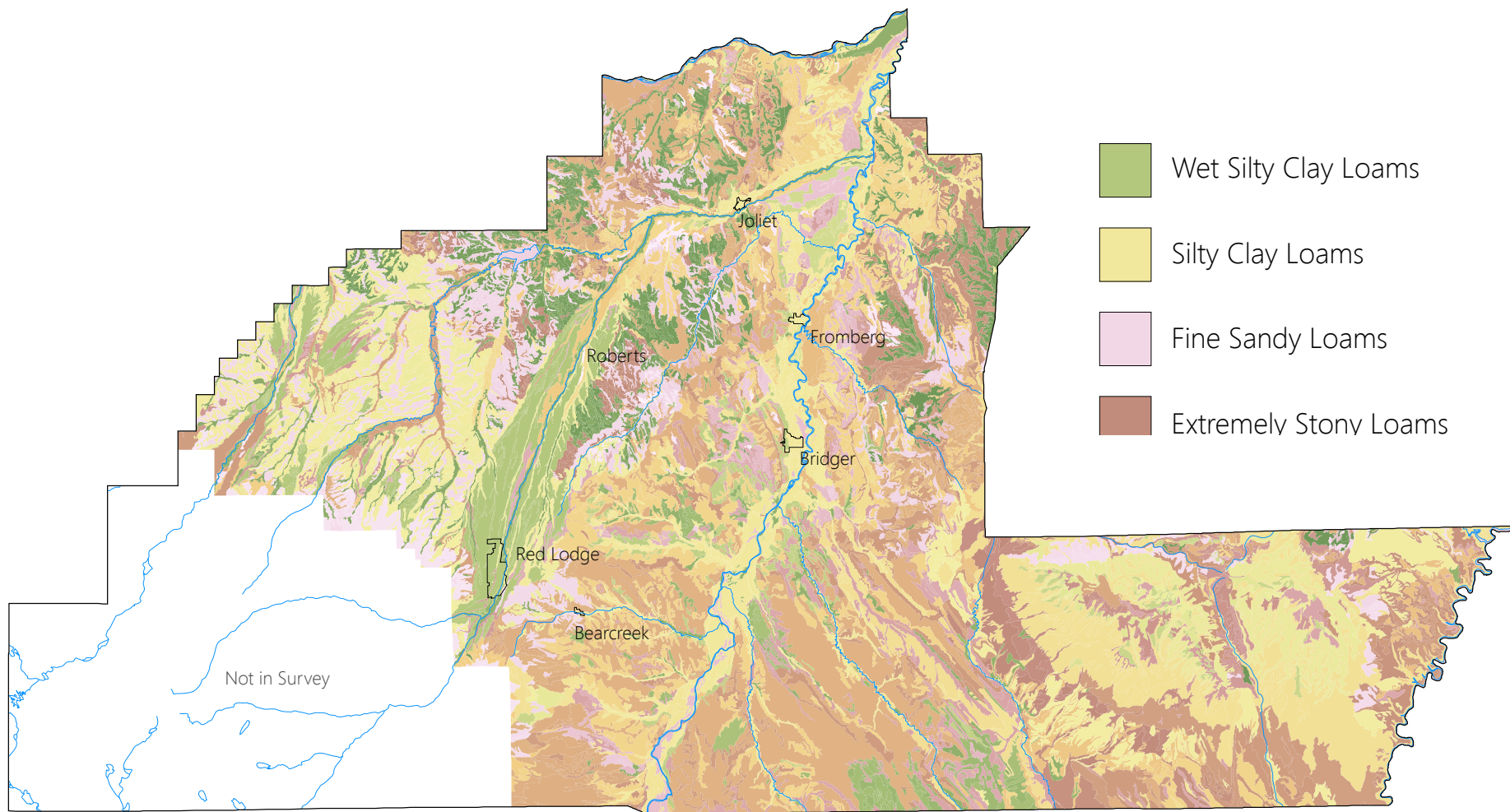
Alluvial Fans (Qaf) — indicate the potential gravel sources in Carbon County. These maps can be found at [www.mbm.g.mtech.edu](http://www.mbm.g.mtech.edu) by going to one of the four appropriate quadrangles covering Carbon County.

Bentonite beds are found on the west and southwest flanks of the Pryor Mountains. Gypsum which has not been mined commercially since the 1920's is found in outcrops east of Gypsum Spring and in three locations west of the Pryor Mountains. Limestone is being mined in the southwest corner of the Pryor Mountains on private land by Big Horn Limestone.

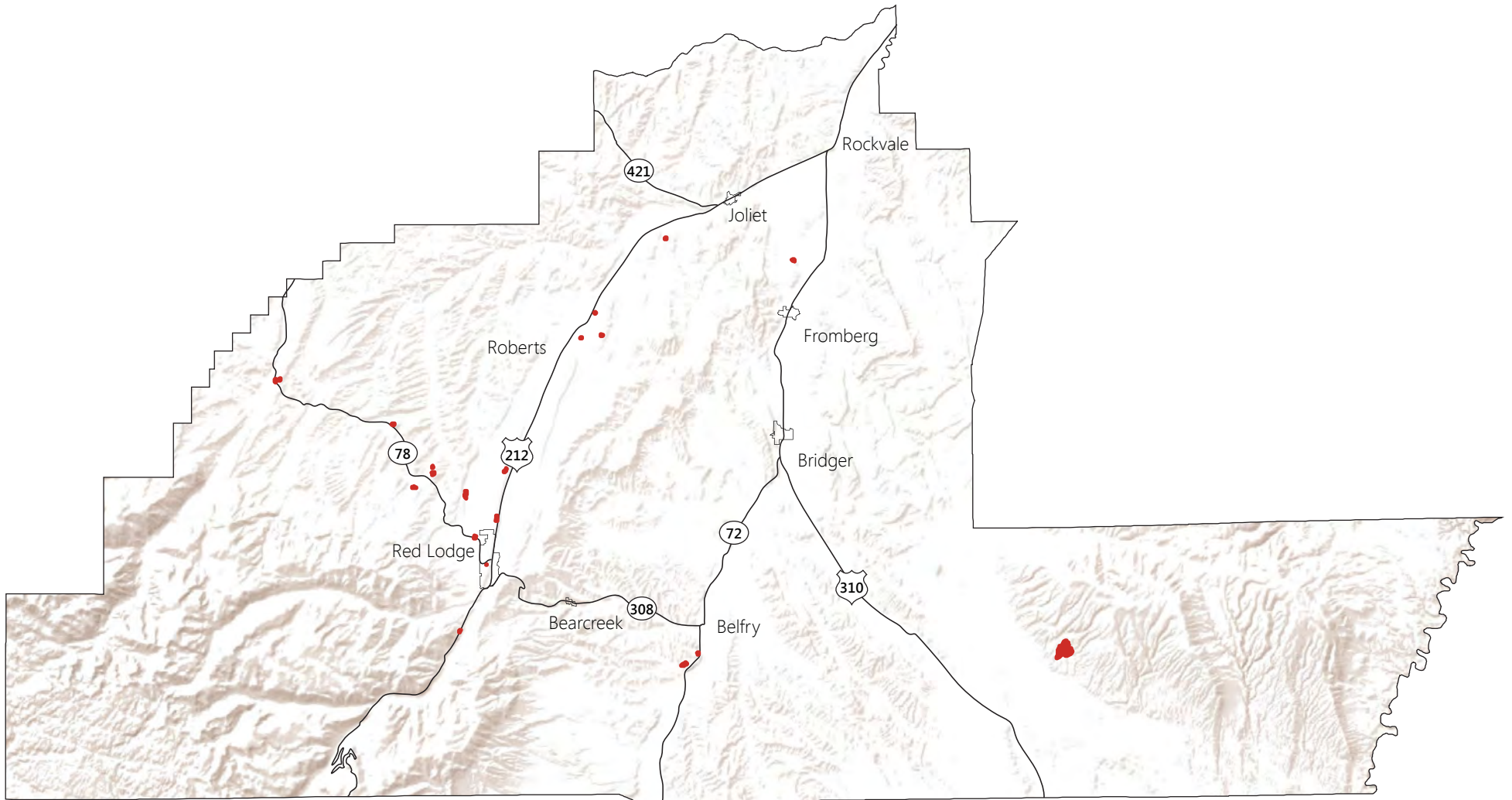
### Oil and Gas

The first oil well drilled in Montana was in Elk Basin, in 1915. At present, only the Dry Creek and Elk Basin Fields are in significant production. Oil exploration is currently occurring near Belfry on private

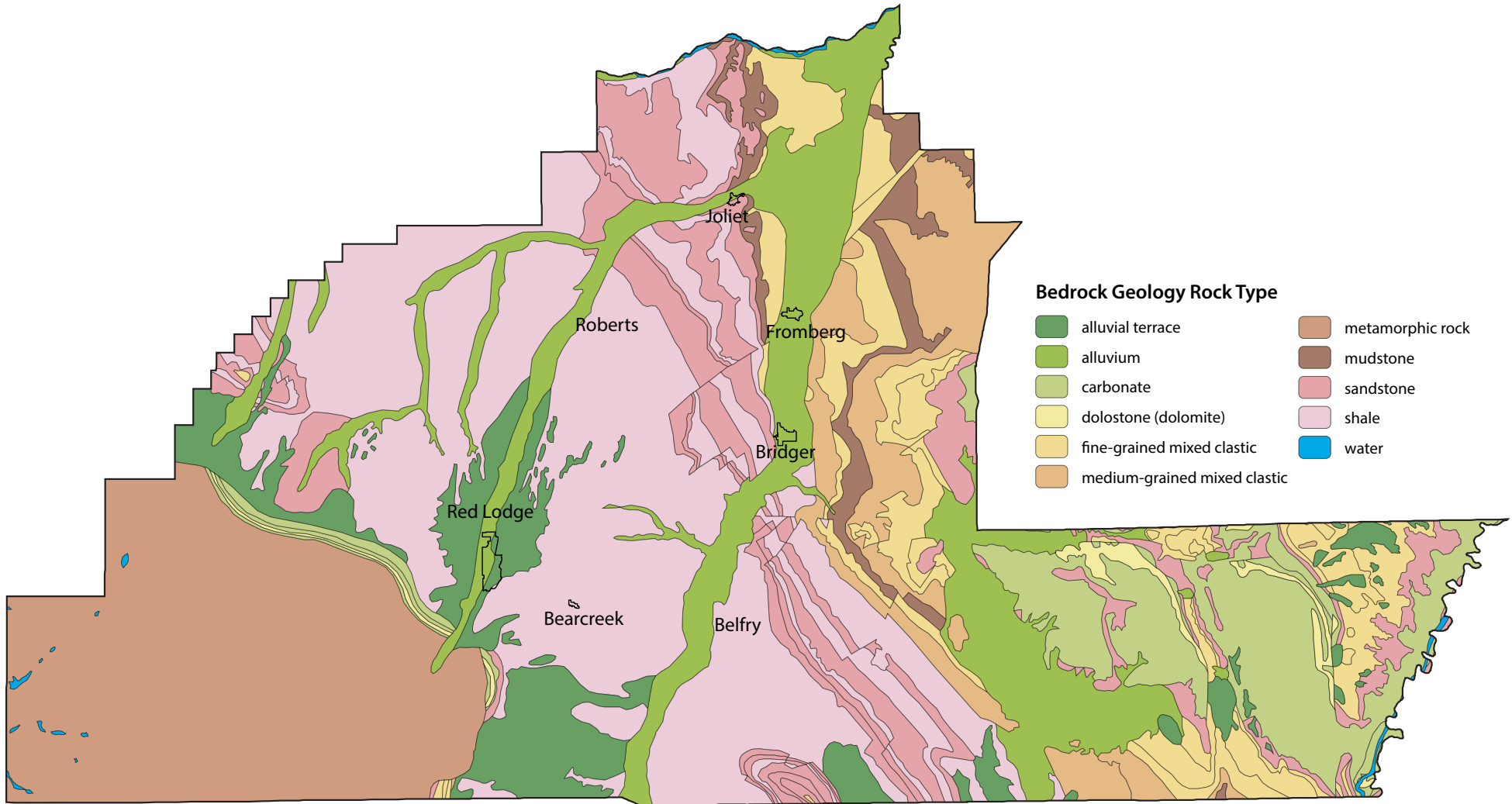




Soils, Carbon County 2003 (NRCS)



Public and Private Open-pit Mining Operations, Carbon County 2014 (Carbon County)



Bedrock Geology, Carbon County 2003 (NRCS)



land, and on the Mackay Dome near Roscoe. Energy Corporation of America (ECA) announced plans to proceed with exploration around the Beartooth Mountain front in 2013, and is currently horizontally drilling in the Mackay Dome area. Most recently, an ECA exploratory well in the Belfry area was under potential litigation for purchasing water from a local gravel pit without a permit. ECA is using hydraulic fracturing techniques to retrieve oil and gas.

### Coal

Coal is found in several locations in the county including Bridger, Fromberg, Red Lodge, Bear Creek, and the Silver Tip coalfield on the Wyoming border. The coal at Bridger is found in three distinct beds covering a total of 13,660 acres. The Bear Creek field contains nine separate beds in the Fort

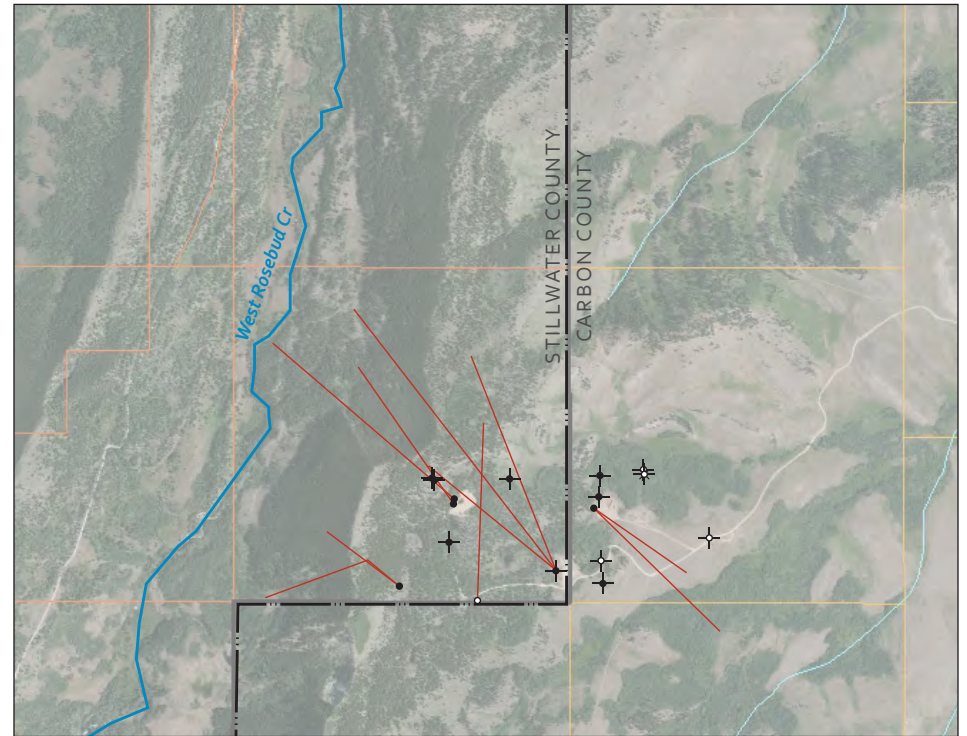
Union formation with a total thickness of 71 feet of coal. West of Rock Creek, coal lies in a narrow, steeply-dipping zone which terminates against the Beartooth thrust fault. The BLM estimates that there are still significant coal reserves in the Bridger and Bear Creek fields.

Despite the availability of coal, there are currently no operating coal mines in Carbon County. Potential coal deposits of medium and volatile bituminous coal are seen on Map XX.

### Surface and Ground Water

Carbon County's water resources are managed for various uses by private and public landowners, water rights holders, and municipalities.

The water resource consists of both surface and groundwater. Groundwater in Carbon County is stored both in consolidated and unconsolidated aquifers. The three primary groundwater



Horizontal Wells in West Carbon County 2014 (MT Board of Oil and Gas Conservation)

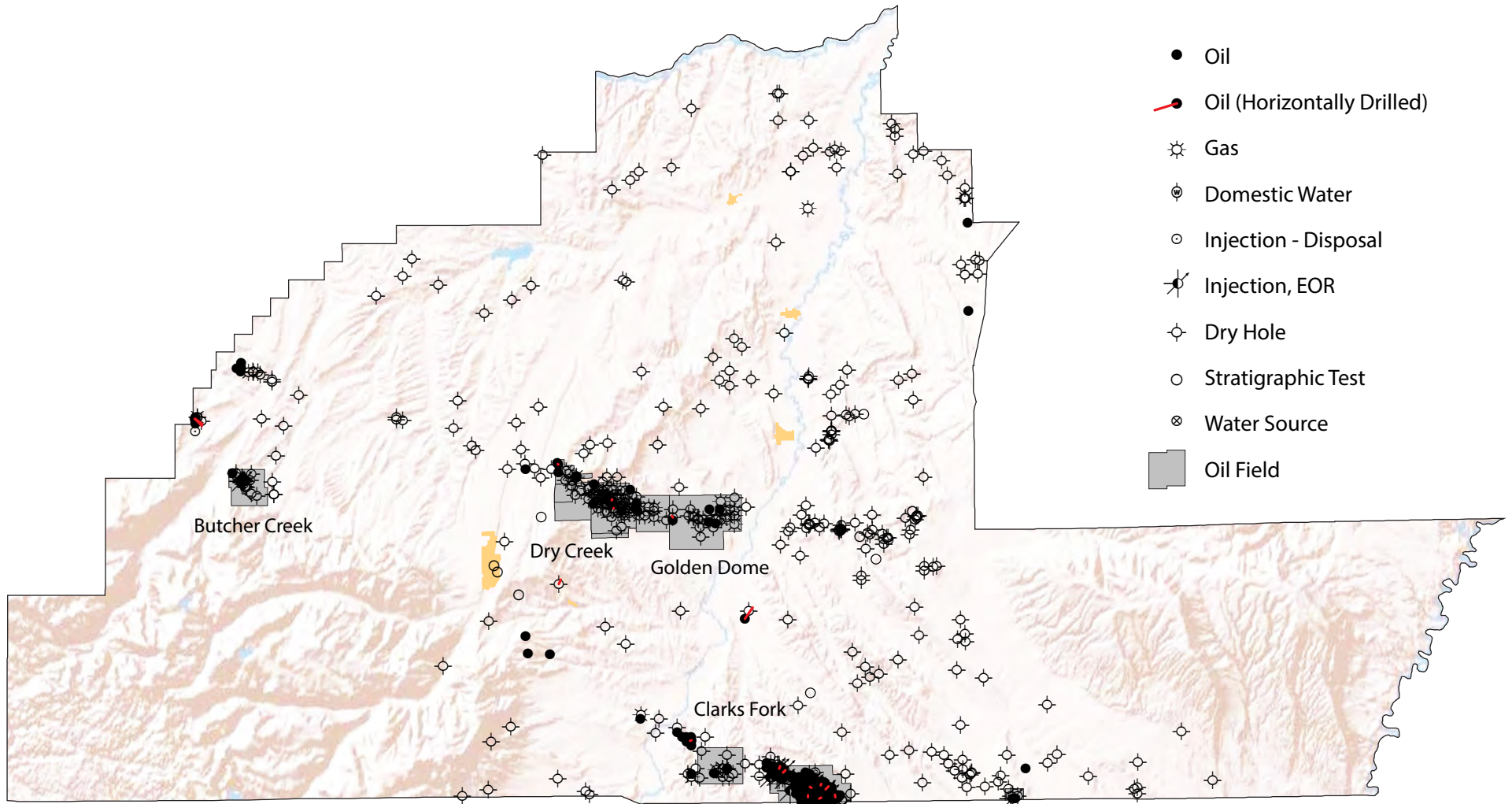
areas in the county are the Beartooth Plateau, the Pryor uplift, and the basins.

There are approximately 6,298 water wells in the county. Peak water well drilling occurred in 2006, while in 2010 only 75 wells were drilled. About 3,691 wells (61%) are used for domestic drinking water. Nineteen

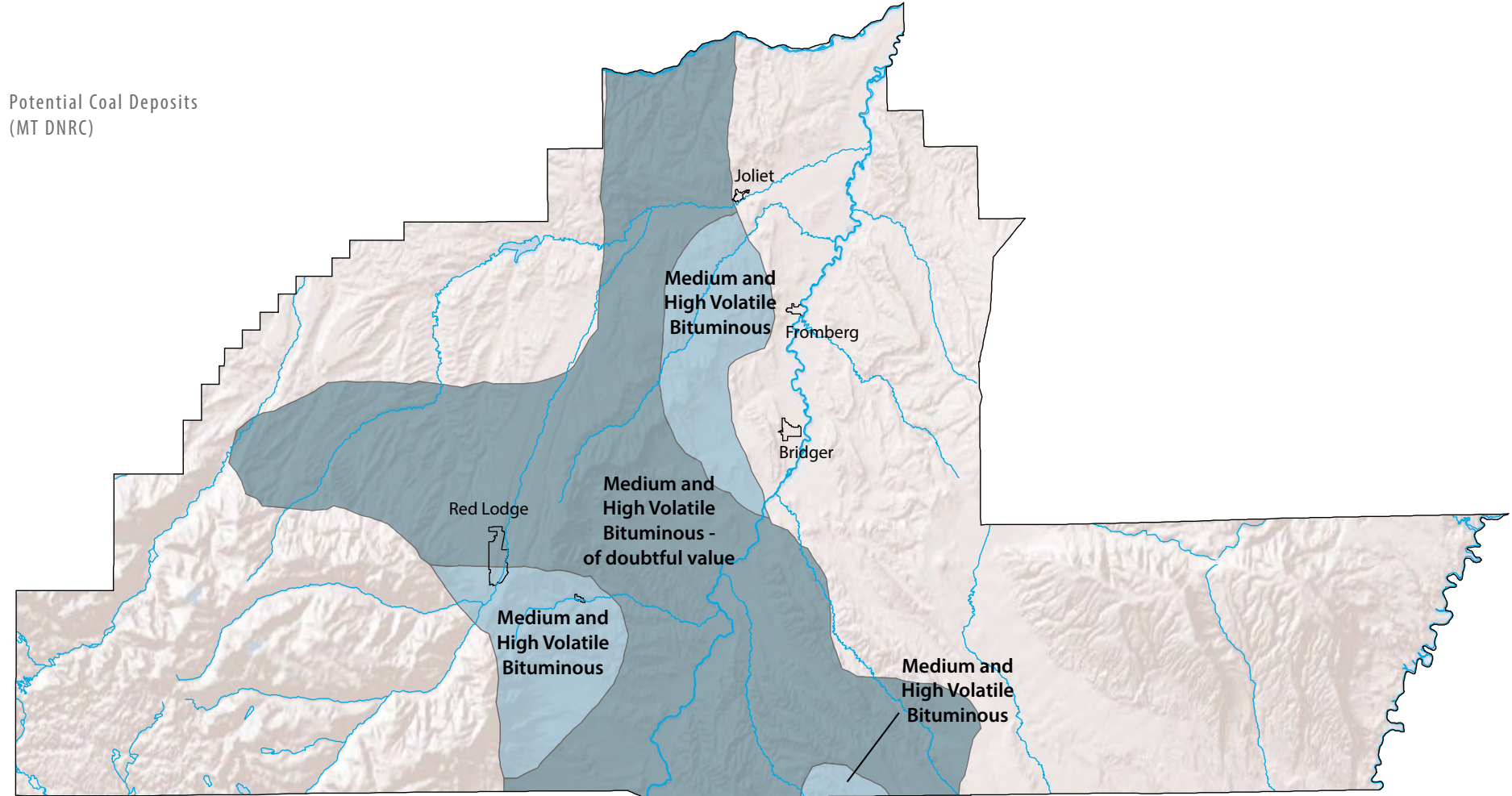
percent, or about 1,127 wells are used for stockwater, while ten percent are irrigation wells.

Domestic water resources are typically less than 100 feet deep. Most of the wells in Carbon County are shallow wells, with only 85 deeper than 500 feet. The first well was drilled in 1883.





Permitted Oil and Gas Wells in Carbon County 2014 (MT Board of Oil and Gas Conservation)



There are two hydroelectric generating stations in the county, both located on the South Fork of Dry Creek east of Red Lodge. The larger station

generates 2 Megawatts while a smaller downstream station generates 0.5 Megawatts.

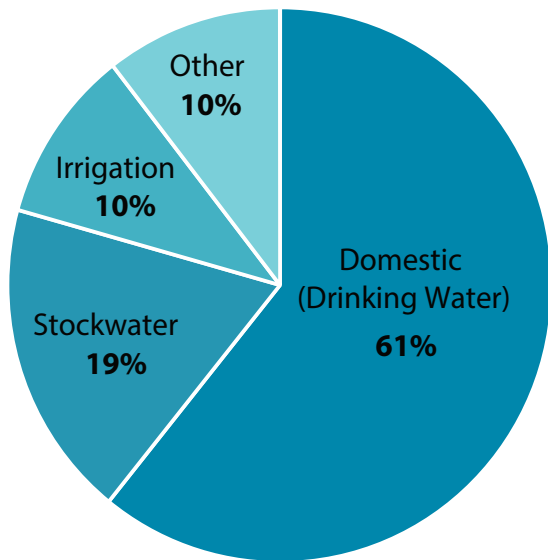
There are two state-owned dams in the county. Located

on Red Lodge Creek, Cooney Dam, which is 102 feet high, was completed in 1937 to provide water storage for irrigation. The reservoir stores 28,400 acre feet

of water. The Glacier Lake Dam at 57 feet in height was also completed in 1937. The Glacier Lake Dam stores 4,200 acre feet of water.

Groundwater and Aquifers (MT Bureau of Mines and Geology)

Aquifer	Thickness	Well Yields	Locations
Alluvium and colluvium	5-80 feet	10-300 gpm	East Rosebud Creek, Red Lodge Creek, Willow Creek, Rock Creek (below Roberts), and the Clarks Fork valley bottoms, eastern tributaries to Bridger Creek
Terrace gravels	7-115 feet	10-50 gpm	Upper East Rosebud Creek, base of Beartooth Face, Upper Rock Creek down to Roberts,
Fort Union formation	600-8,500 feet	1-50 gpm	Much of the dry uplands between the Clarks Fork and Rock Creek Valleys from south of Bearcreek north to Boyd, western quarter of the county excluding the higher elevations and stream bottoms
Hell Creek	100-600 feet	1-15 gpm	Butcher Creek area, uplands between Cottonwood and Silver Tip Creeks, uplands between Boyd and Bridger
Eagle formation	200-250 feet	12-330 gpm	Uplands east of Cottonwood Creek, east side of the Clarks Fork valley from Bridger north to the Yellowstone County line
Telegraph Creek formation			East side of Clarks Fork Valley north to the Yellowstone County line (parallel to Eagle formation)
	180-300 feet	1-18 gpm	
Chugwater formation	100-650 feet	Large	West side of the Big Horn River, west and south flanks of the Pryor Mountains
Madison limestone	1,000+ feet	Large	West wall of Big Horn Canyon, Crooked Creek, headwaters of Bridger Creek

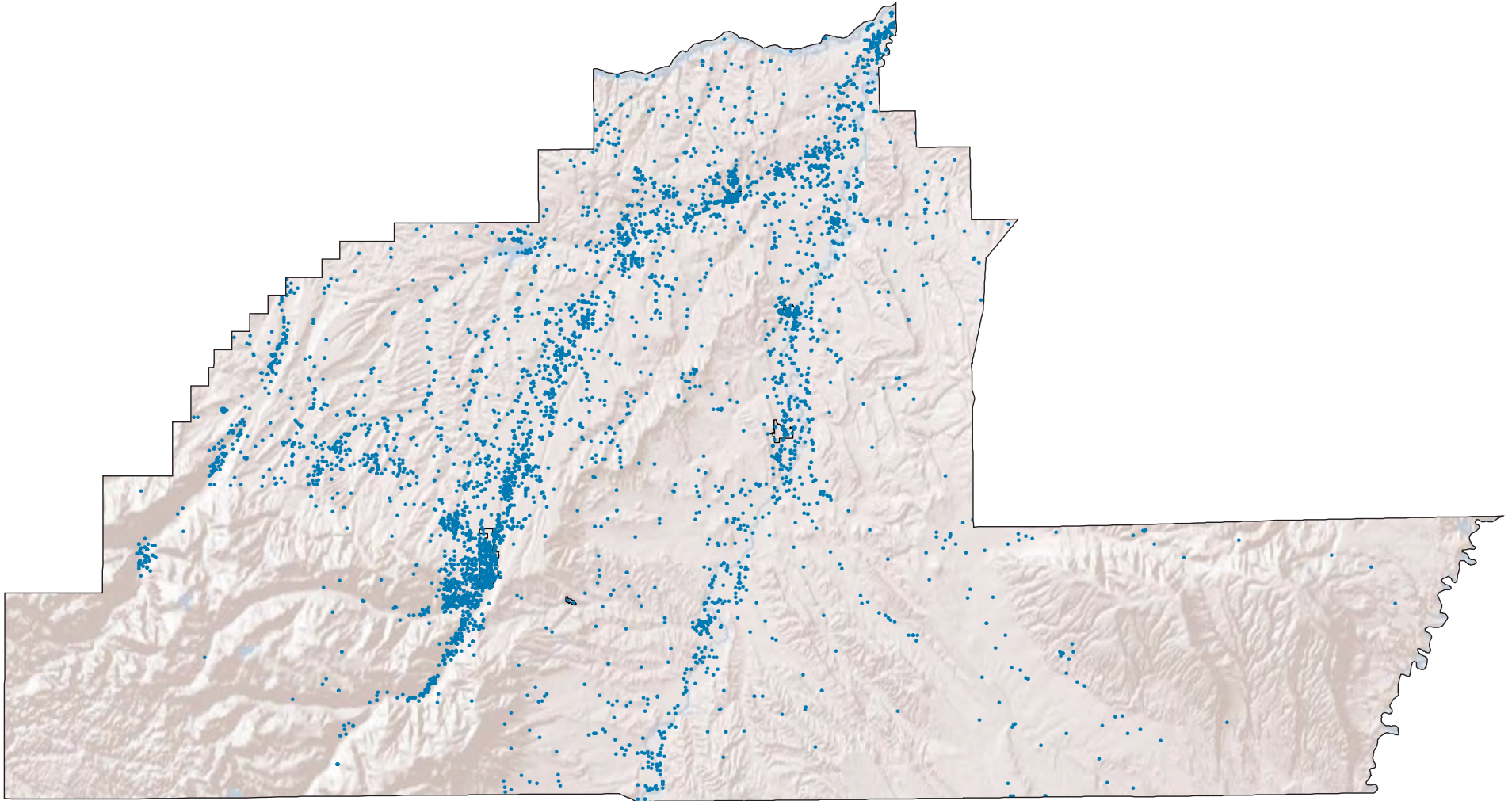


Water Well Usage, 2013 (MT Bureau of Mines and Geology)



Cooney Reservoir (above) is used primarily for agricultural irrigation and recreation.





Groundwater Wells , Carbon County, 2014 (MT Bureau of Mines and Geology)

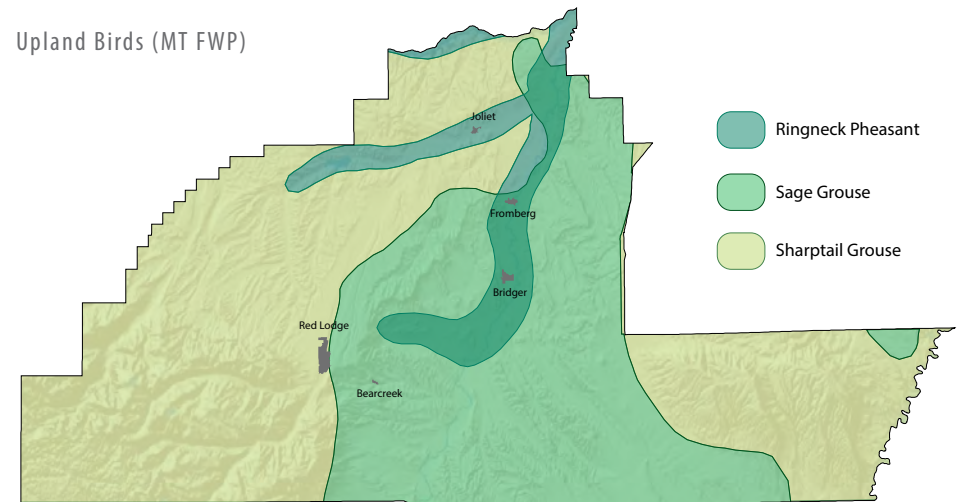
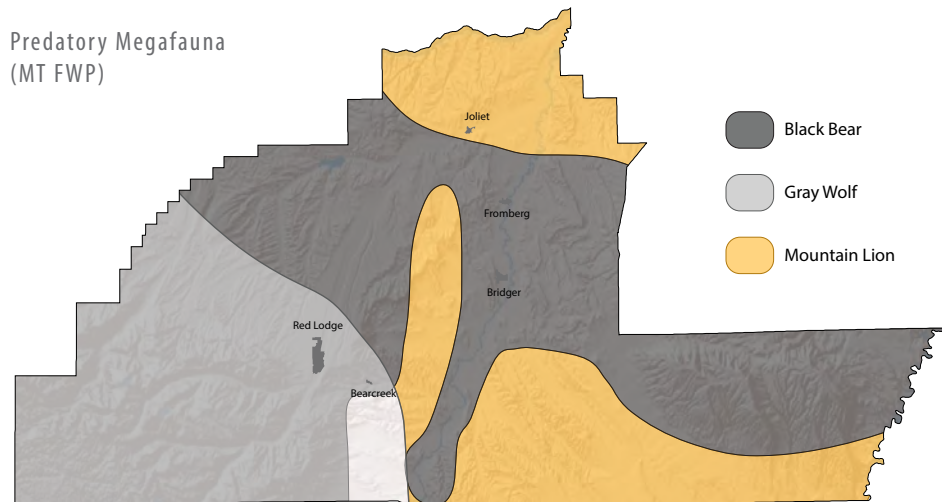
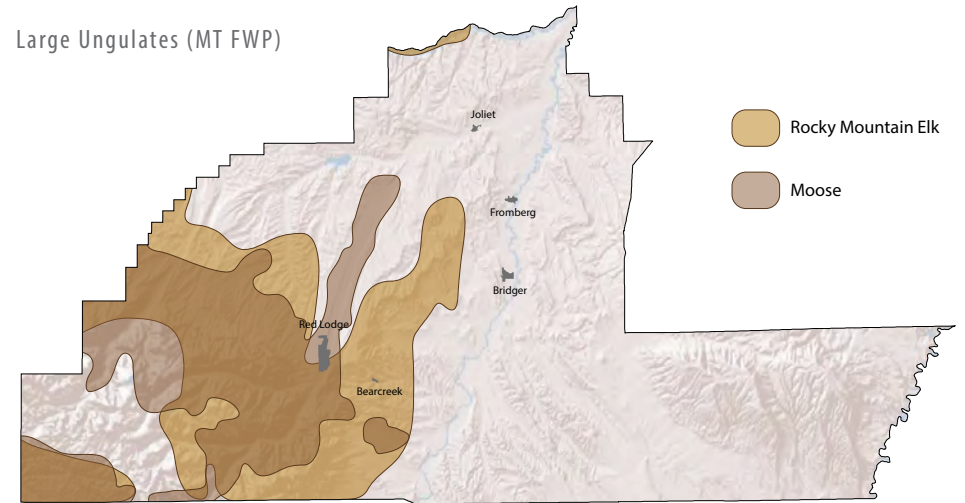
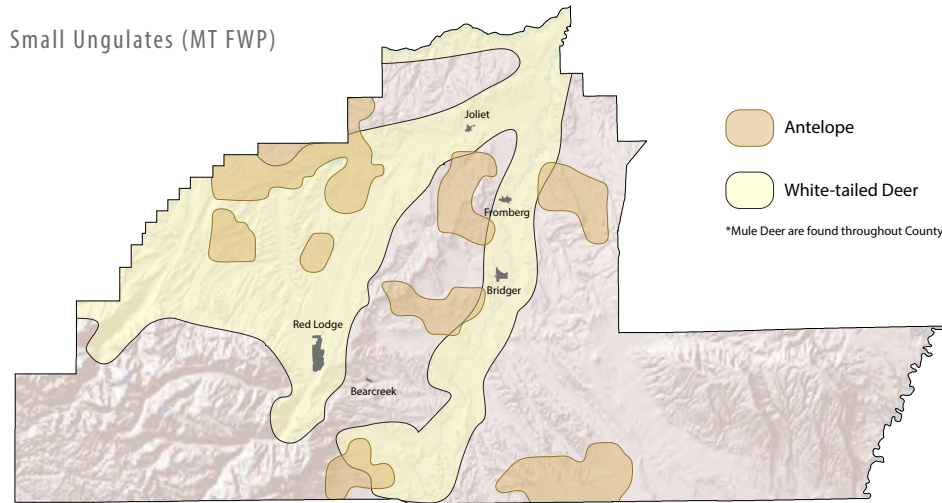


## Wildlife

The diversity and extent of high quality habitat in the

county supports a wide range of wildlife species. In addition to numerous ungulates, Carbon County is home to two species

of bears, gray wolves, mountain lions, a variety of upland birds, raptors, and non-game species.



## Scenic Resources

Scenic resources, like all other natural and fiscal resources, should be considered a significant economic asset for Carbon County. County residents and visitors value the outstanding natural appearing landscape which is an important facet to the quality of life in Carbon County and a draw for recreationists, current residents, and potential future residents.

In 1989, the Beartooth Highway was classified as a National Forest Scenic Byway because of the spectacular views along its route. The Beartooth Highway received about 953 vehicles per day in 2011, averaged over the whole year (including seasonal closures). The Absaroka-Beartooth Mountain front range is a dramatic topographical feature visible from most the county, including along the main highways.

Height and setback requirements for development on visually sensitive high points and ridgelines have been specifically addressed in the Red Lodge Development Code. Similar regulations do not exist in the county.

## Culture and Tourism

In recent decades, culture and tourism have become major economic drivers in Carbon County. Retail shopping, lodging, dining and touring have been driven by growth in Billings and other outside areas. Tourism is quickly overtaking agriculture as the county's most important economic resource.

The county can be classified by four descriptive characteristics:

- Gateway
- Amenity-rich
- Rural
- Second home/retirement

These all provide immense value to the citizens in this region. As a gateway community, Carbon County inherits a strong tourism base because of Yellowstone National Park and the Beartooth Highway.

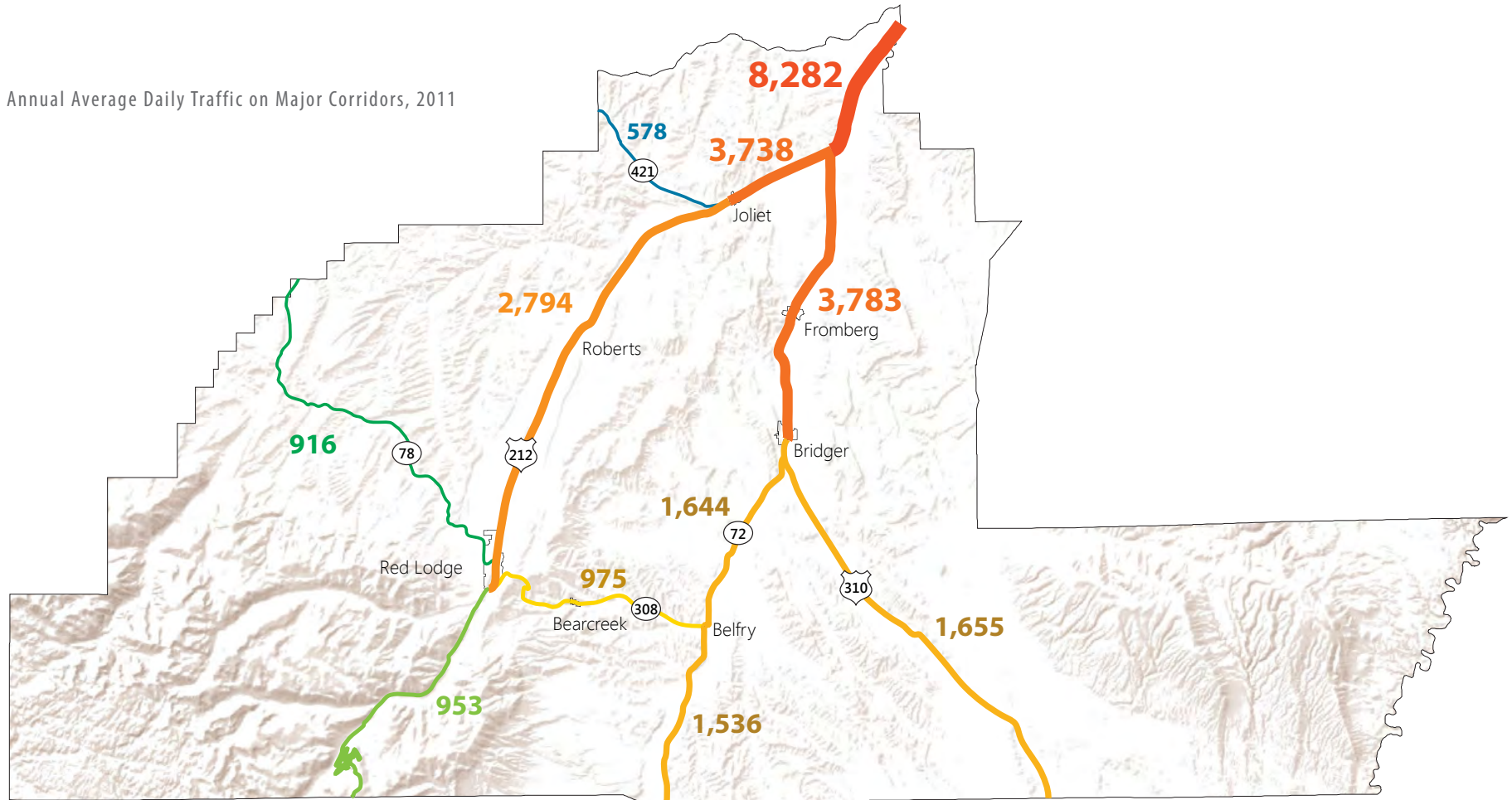
Being located between 15 minutes to a few-hour's drive from Billings, Carbon County is just far enough away from Montana's largest metro area to be considered a rural community, but also close enough to be accessible to the roughly 110,000 people in the Billings metro area. Because of proximity to natural amenities like Yellowstone National Park, the city, and the availability of services and comforts, Carbon County has become a destination for retirees and second homeowners.

As such, the county has seen remarkable increases in vehicle traffic from Billings. Annual average daily traffic (AADT)

between Laurel and Rockvale is 8,282 vehicles per day, a 54% increase from 2009 (AADT is the number of vehicles traveling on a section of road throughout the year divided by 365 days). This is higher daily vehicle travel than that between Big Timber and Livingston. About the same number of vehicles travel between Joliet and Laurel as between Bridger and Laurel. Traffic flows generally decrease with the distance traveled south from the Rockvale junction, with the exception of cars crossing the Wyoming stateline.

Yellowstone National Park and the Beartooth Pass continue to be a major tourist attraction. The Beartooth Pass entrance through Cooke City/Silver Gate is the least traveled of the three entrances to the park in Montana, however this is due to the seasonal highway closure.

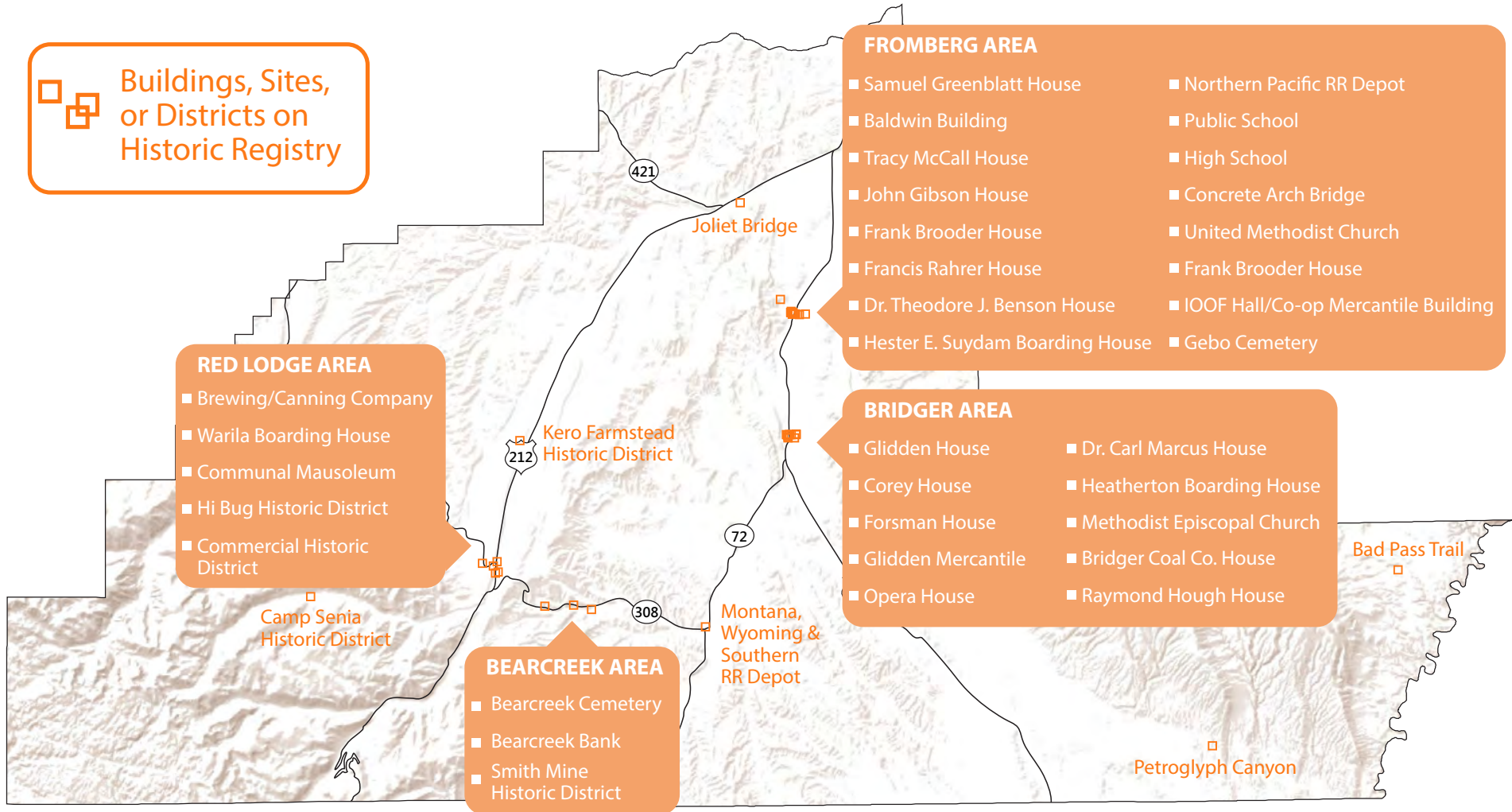
Annual Average Daily Traffic on Major Corridors, 2011



Highway	Location	Average Daily Traffic (1999)	Average Daily Traffic (2011)	Percent Change
72	Between Bridger and Belfry	1,400	1,664	19%
78	Between Red Lodge and Roscoe	836	916	10%
212	Between the Yellowstone/Carbon County line and Rockvale	5,375	8,282	54%
212	Between Joliet and Red Lodge	2,193	2,794	27%
212	Between Red Lodge and the Wyoming line (averaged over 12 months)	755	953	26%
308	Between Belfry and Red Lodge	889	975	10%
310	Between Bridger and the Wyoming line	1,314	1,665	27%
310	Between Rockvale and Fromberg	-	3,783	-



**Buildings, Sites, or Districts on Historic Registry**



Registered Historic Resources in Carbon County, 2014



The route through the Paradise Valley from Livingston to Gardiner (open year round) sees over twice as many vehicles than the Beartooth Pass. The entrance from Bozeman through the Gallatin Valley and West Yellowstone sees a similar number of vehicles.

Carbon County's abundance of cultural, heritage or archaeological resources plays a role in development permitting and review, particularly in rural unincorporated areas. Most development projects require a state cultural resources inventory and approval. For certain projects, the state generally requires impacts to these resources to be mitigated.

Of the more than one and a half thousand sites recorded in Carbon County, 57 individual sites, five historic districts and one archaeological district have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places as

of 2014. A National Register designation affords special protection for publicly-owned sites, and access to technical expertise and eligibility for tax credits on privately-owned sites.

# 3 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A rigorous public and stakeholder input process helped inform and create the goals, policies and visions in this growth policy.

A large part of the growth policy update involved soliciting input from citizens and community organizations. Public engagement was both an opportunity for education and for feedback. The following is a summary of the process that helped build consensus and a heightened awareness of the roles and responsibilities between public officials and the broader community.

## Stakeholder and Public Outreach

Building collaborative relationships with existing organizations was key to the

success of this plan. Consultants met with a variety of community leaders to problem solve and identify needs and goals for their constituents. The following organizations played key roles in developing a vision for this plan:

- Red Lodge Senior Center
- Joliet Town Council
- Bridger Town Council
- Bridger Senior Center
- Fromberg Zoning Administrator
- Fromberg Senior Center
- Beartooth RC&D

- Roberts Community Foundation
- Red Lodge Community Development Office
- Historic Preservation Board

## County Field Trip

As part of the county's effort to fully engage the breadth of its citizens, this growth policy update included a field trip as part of the public and stakeholder input process. This trip consisted of three days of countywide field surveys, videography, interviews and walking audits to document community conditions, and to

open a dialogue with residents and business owners about the growth policy update. Consultants distributed meeting schedules and preliminary data concerning Carbon County growth and development.

## Community Outreach

Public open houses gave residents an opportunity to comment on a variety of plan elements at varying stages of development. Citizens provided insight into the unique challenges faced by their community. Open houses were held in Bridger and Fromberg.

The planning team also conducted informal conversations, interviews, and video surveys throughout the county. “Pop-ups”, or events held without pre-arranged schedules or locations were held in other incorporated and unincorporated communities such as Joliet, Roscoe and Edgar.

One of the final products of the public process was a documentary of the input received. This method of public involvement has few precedents in Montana, and provides a very powerful tool to gain understanding of what the growth policy is, the update process and the information gathered. Capturing interviews from local business owners, officials, residents and passers-by helped understand the character of the county. Using social media, the short video was broadcast to a

wide audience, increasing the effectiveness of the plan’s vision and message.

The video can be seen at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gspf\\_uBeAfE&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gspf_uBeAfE&feature=youtu.be)

In addition, a Citizen Opinion Survey was distributed at each of the Town Halls and the feedback provided additional guidance for the direction of this plan. Many of the county’s past issues or priorities were reaffirmed through the new survey results.

A secure water supply, preservation of the region’s agricultural lands and natural resource development remain top priorities for residents. Additionally, affordable housing and protection of private property rights followed in importance. Respondents noted

that finding job opportunities within the County have been difficult. Also, they affirmed that new development should be responsible for paying its way.

### **Plan Website**

Efficient distribution of information was also crucial to success of this plan. The county’s website hosted a page dedicated to the update process. County staff regularly updated the site with essential documents, presentations, and schedule announcements. Consultants also utilized the county-wide newspaper to disseminate information.



# 4 KEY ISSUES

The following issues were derived from data gathering, and the public and stakeholder input process. They are addressed in three broad categories: Community and Economic Development, Tourism and Recreation, Natural Resources, and Land Use and Agriculture.

## Community and Economic Development

Issues related to community and economic development varied heavily depending on location. In towns, the age and condition of public water and sewer infrastructure hindered new growth. Residents and community leaders in the Clarks Fork Valley perceived there was not enough growth in the towns or rural areas to sustain the existing population's demand for jobs and services. In these communities, any form of economic growth was desired. In areas where tourism made

up a higher percentage of the economy, the focus was on attracting more tourism in the winter season.

Key Issues:

1. Infrastructure capacity and condition, and funding public improvement projects
2. Housing supply, condition, and affordability in small rural towns
3. Lack of new jobs to attract residents
4. Aging population and lack of younger workers
5. Housing availability and affordability

6. Small or declining tax base
7. Year round survival of small businesses
8. Meeting potential growth demand while maintaining small town character
9. Opposition to natural resource development

## Tourism and Recreation

Recreational opportunities are a major economic resource and bring many people to the county in the summer and winter seasons. Although the economies of some towns and cities are largely driven

by tourism, communities in the Clarks Fork Valley do not see significant benefits from tourism. As the Billings metropolitan area continues to grow, more and more people will visit Carbon County.

Key Issues:

1. Promoting tourism in the spring, fall, and winter months
2. Expanding tourism and recreation opportunities in the Clarks Forks Valley

## Natural Resources and Environment

Nearly every issue was



geographically delineated between the county's various areas, but none more than natural resource development. County residents in the Clarks Fork Valley believe future growth will be dependent on the development oil, gas, or coal resources. Conversely, residents along the Beartooth front and activists groups were working to prevent oil and gas development countywide due to the real potential for environmental impacts. Specific environmental issues included the impacts of resource development on water and air quality, roads, and wildlife habitat.

Development of other resources was prevented by the expense of transporting the resource. Coal, for example, is present in the county but the removal of rail lines over time has made its extraction and transportation too expensive.

**Key Issues:**

1. Regional differences in demand for resource development
2. Potential impediments to economic development
3. Geographic location and availability of the resource
4. Impacts to sensitive environmental resources
5. Availability of groundwater
6. Protection of scenic and recreational resources

**Land Use and Agriculture**

Land use and regulation was a divisive issue countywide. Although many criticized the proliferation of unsightly activities such as junkyards on private property, there was not a strong desire for stronger land use controls in rural areas.

Some landowners expressed a

desire to utilize stronger land use regulation to mitigate potential impacts caused by oil and gas development along the Beartooth front. Interest was expressed in pursuing "Part 1" county zoning as enabled by MCA 76-2-101.

As in many parts of rural Montana, the preservation of Carbon County's agricultural land is of high importance to farmers, ranchers, and rural residents. In the past, sprawling growth and widespread subdivision of farm land in areas near towns has threatened the county's agricultural resources. In addition, suburban-type growth increases infrastructure and service costs, limiting the county's ability to provide acceptable levels of service.

The US Forest Service works closely with the county and other organizations to promote

proper growth near its lands in the Custer National Forest.

**Key Issues:**

1. Market-driven development and subdivision of productive agricultural land
2. Development of irrigated (rather than dryland) agricultural land
3. Lack of land use controls preventing unwanted uses in rural areas
4. Expanding pattern of single-lot subdivision
5. Potential development in the wildland-urban interface
6. Growth along urban boundaries that increases infrastructure and service costs
7. Increases in commuter traffic to Billings

# 5 VISION

The vision is the The Growth Policy, by guiding land use decisions, is one way of moving towards the vision residents have of the future.

The following statements describe the desired future of the residents and leaders of Carbon County.

- Agriculture remains an important component of the County's economy and way of life. Agricultural lands are largely retained in agricultural production.
- Land use change and development occurs in such a way so as not to jeopardize water quality or availability.
- Economic enterprises which offer a living wage, build upon the agricultural base where possible, are

scaled appropriately to be consistent with residents' quality of life expectations, and do not cause significant degradation to water or air quality.

- Carbon County remains a good place to live as evidenced by good schools, high levels of community involvement, small family farms, low crime rates, clean air and water, open spaces and scenic vistas, abundant wildlife, and friendly people.
- Local governments in Carbon County are working in harmony with each other

for the benefit of all county residents, especially in the areas of land use, services, and public infrastructure.

The goals, objectives and implementation measures contained in the Growth Policy originated with the issues and vision identified by county residents. Each of the major issues raised by citizens--that the county is authorized to address--is embodied in one or more of the following goals and objectives. The goals, objectives, and implementation measures are for a five-year planning period. The

implementation measures require a variety of actions on the part of the county. Some of the implementation measures will be ongoing during this planning period, some will extend beyond the five years, some of the measures will guide the county in responding to development applications, and some will require county-initiated actions.







# 6

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals are the first step in achieving the Vision, which is a statement that expresses the mission and direction of Carbon County’s citizens and leaders.

### Goal 1. Land Use and Development

Encourage land uses that are appropriate on the lands for which they are proposed, consider and act upon new development proposals to the county in a consistent manner, and approve new development that is compatible with the retention, to the greatest extent possible, of lands currently in agricultural production. (“Appropriate” in this case means that the land has the physical characteristics necessary to support the proposed use)

**Objective 1.1:** Ensure county subdivision and development permit regulations are in conformance with the Growth Policy and development occurs according to the conditions of County approval.

**1.1.A.** Revise subdivision regulations as needed to be in accordance with the Growth Policy.

**1.1.B.** Revise development regulations as needed to be in conformance with the Growth Policy.

**1.1.C.** Develop a system to track the approvals process

to confirm that conditions of approval have been satisfied. Include costs to County for this work in final plat approval fees.

**Objective 1.2:** Increase understanding of present land use change trends and consequences. Develop factual information upon which to base regulations that will guide growth in a manner consistent with residents’ vision for the future

**1.2.A.** Complete a build-out analysis to look at how development is presently occurring and will continue to

occur without intervention.

**1.2.B.** Track the number of acres of agricultural land converted to residential development in the county. Report this number to the citizens of the county annually.

**Objective 1.3:** Assist farmers and ranchers who wish to continue using their lands for agricultural production.

**1.3.A.** Make resources available upon request to assist citizens in the development of local zoning districts (citizen-petition zoning.) (76-2-



101 MCA)

**1.3.B.** Revise the subdivision regulations to require that all subdivision covenants contain a statement clarifying that agricultural operations are exempt from governmental zoning and nuisance ordinances according to the right-to-farm statute (76-2-901, MCA), that developers notify owners of any existing water delivery ditches, pipelines, and facilities in the subdivision to assure unobstructed use and maintenance consistent with historic and legal rights., and that the subdivision plat shows on its face, water course easements to access, use, maintain and repair water user facilities.

**1.3.C.** Continue to make the Carbon County Code of the West (Resolution 05-20)

available to realtors and new residents. (The code is posted on the county's website, [www.co.carbon.mt.us](http://www.co.carbon.mt.us).)

**1.3.D.** 1.3.F. Provide basic referral information in response to requests about conservation easements. The county has no funding, nor is it proposing the use of public monies, to purchase agricultural or conservation easements.

**Objective 1.4:** Encourage development in areas that are not in agricultural production

**1.4.A.** As authorized by the state legislature in 2003, in 76-3-509 MCA, formulate and adopt regulations to encourage cluster development for those developments that meet the definitions.

**Objective 1.5:** Ensure direct County input into any proposal

with the potential to cause large-scale impacts to land use, natural resources, or quality of life in the county.

**1.5.A.** Request information and briefings, and actively respond to requests for comment by state and federal agencies proposing projects such as land exchanges, and large scale mineral or recreation development in the county.

**1.5.B.** Allow the Planning Board more involvement when significant archaeological or historical properties are affected a development, and when recommending impact mitigation to significant sites (listed on the National Register of Historic Places or determined eligible for listing).

**1.5.C.** Request that the Montana Department of

Transportation provide information on how alternatives under consideration for state highway projects will affect existing residences and agricultural land.

**Objective 1.6:** Encourage the voluntary preservation of open space and wildlife habitat in the county.

**1.6.A.** Encourage developers to dedicate to the property owners' association open space, wildlife habitat, and/or riparian areas within or in close proximity to each major subdivision or development to comply with parkland requirements.

**1.6.B.** When revising the subdivision regulations, incorporate a voluntary request that developers coordinate with the local Fish, Wildlife and Parks Biologist early in the subdivision development

process about subdivision design, mitigation of impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat, and public safety related to wildlife.

**Objective 1.7:** Direct urban growth to existing communities, incorporated towns and cities, or platted unincorporated places

**1.7.A.** Explore the potential for future land use mapping in areas immediately adjacent to existing communities

**Objective 1.8:** Cooperate across jurisdictional boundaries to discuss future projects and development approval processes Respond in a consistent manner to applications for the erection of telecommunications towers.

**1.8.A.** Prepare and adopt a policy which can be provided to developers ahead of time to guide the review of telecommunications towers applications and permits. The policy should encour-

age consideration of visual impacts and co-location to minimize the number of towers necessary.

**1.8.B.** Consider a telecommunications tower ordinance to accomplish the policy in 1.8.A.

## **Goal 2. Water Resources Management**

**Ensure that proposed land uses consider and disclose impacts to ground and surface water quality and availability.**

**Objective 2.1:** Increase knowledge about hydrological resources in the county.

**2.1.A.** Continue to work with Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology to study ground water quantity on the East and West Benches of Rock Creek, and to research the effects of development on ground and surface water resources.

**2.1.B.** Seek grant funds and technical assistance to develop a data base for septic systems and wells. Include a septic system layer in any Geographical Information System that is implemented by the county.

**Objective 2.2:** Require the development of public water and/or wastewater systems when necessary to protect water quality.

**2.2.A.** Use the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's standards to determine the factors and thresholds to be considered when determining which developments will require a public water supply and/or public wastewater system. Incorporate these into the subdivision regulations.

**Objective 2.3:** Require developers to disclose potential effects of development on ground and surface water resources.

**2.3.A.** Revise the subdivision and development regulations to require developers to identify, disclose and mitigate potential impacts to groundwater and surface water resources within a one-mile radius of the proposed development, or to disclose when the effects are unknown.

**Objective 2.4:** Assist unincorporated communities with ongoing maintenance, repair, or expansion of sewer and water infrastructure.

**2.4.A.** Encourage communities to use staff assistance and resources from the Beartooth Resource Conservation and Development Area (RC&D), the Local Government Center at MSU-Bozeman, and the Department of Commerce to assist in obtaining grant funds, and in capital planning and the development of rate structures.

**2.4.B.** Identify technical training needs county-wide and coordinate resources to offer training. Continue to apply for grant funds to assist in covering costs for training water and sewer facility operators.

**Objective 2.5:** Assist in protecting public drinking water supplies due to growth causing increased pressure on scarce drinking water resources.

**2.5.A.** Invite the Montana Department of Environment Quality DEQ to make a presentation to the county, local government public works directors, and unincorporated community's water system operators on developing wellhead protection plans.

**2.5.B.** Apply for grants and request assistance from MSU, MSU-Billings, Montana Tech, and Rocky Mountain College, to accomplish the preparation wellhead protec-

tion plans. (MCA 75-6-120, Wellhead and source water protection programs)

**Objective 2.6:** Continue to administer the floodplain program for unincorporated areas of Carbon County.

**2.6.A.** Revise the Carbon County Floodplain Ordinance to comply with updates to state and federal policy.

**2.6.B.** Coordinate with DNRC, Carbon Conservation District, and any other parties involved in the joint permitting process.

**2.6.C.** Consider stream development setbacks on a case by case basis.

### **Goal 3. Financial Management and Public Services**

**Ensure that new development mitigates to a reasonable extent, increased costs or impacts to levels of services,**

**and public facilities already provided to existing residents and landowners.**

**Objective 3.1:** Ensure that both on-site and off-site costs associated with development are identified and borne by the appropriate party.

**3.1.A.** Perform an impact fee study to explore the feasibility and adoption of impact fees.

**3.1.B.** Meet when appropriate with industry representatives to discuss demands on infrastructure and services produced by company employees residing in the county and the means to assist the county in recovering associated costs.

**3.1.C.** Work with industry representatives as appropriate to coordinate transportation arrangements to minimize traffic and impacts to roads and bridges.

**3.1.D.** Identify and adopt incentives for development that minimize costs to the county.

**3.1.E.** Review, and as necessary, update planning and development review fees to cover costs including Growth Policy revision and updates.

**3.1.F.** Review, and as necessary, revise fees collected for weed field review and bonding, and fire protection review.

**Objective 3.2:** Ensure that County expenditures for emergency services are planned appropriately to provide maximum benefit for the funds expended.

**3.2.A.** Complete implementation of the rural addressing and Enhanced 911 systems.

**3.2.B.** Update the county Emergency Operations Plan.

**3.2.C.** Compile and review

statistics on emergency service requests and response times. From this information, develop standards for levels of service for fire protection, ambulance service, and law enforcement, throughout the county. Utilize the level of service standards to guide decisions on the investment of public funds in infrastructure, staffing, and equipment for the provision of emergency services.

**Objective 3.3:** Ensure that County expenditures for public facilities and services are planned appropriately to provide maximum benefit for the funds expended.

**3.3.A.** Prepare an capital improvements plan or needs assessment.

**3.3.B.** Review and revise as necessary the road policy on accepting private roads.

**3.3.C.** Complete a condi-

tion assessment for each county-owned building and develop a life cycle plan which identifies the projected annual expenditures for operation and maintenance.

**3.3.D.** Complete an inventory of the known county roads. Develop a road management plan which identifies the number of road miles needing county maintenance and/or rehabilitation and the frequency, by road miles. Develop a method for prioritizing road maintenance.

**3.3.E.** Continue to update the map of county road maintenance and snowplowing priorities available.

**3.3.F.** Complete an inventory and condition assessment of the bridges for which the county is responsible. Continue to replace county bridges according to the schedule of priorities and availability of funds.

**3.3.G.** Assist sewer and water districts in capital improvement planning and structuring fees by providing resources and/or workshops available through MACo and the Department of Commerce.

**3.3.H.** Consider hiring a full-time road or public works supervisor.

**Objective 3.4:** Participate in economic development activities which benefit county residents and businesses.

**3.4.A.** Continue membership and active participation in the Beartooth RC&D. Utilize the RC&D staff to assist communities and businesses with locally-initiated projects.

**3.4.B.** Continue membership and active participation in the Beartooth Economic Development District to obtain access to loan funds for small businesses in the county.

**3.4.C.** Apply for grant funds from the State Department of Commerce and the Federal Economic Development Administration as opportunities become available, to construct and upgrade infrastructure in support of development consistent with the goals of this plan. Request and utilize technical assistance as the need arises to support economic development.

**Objective 3.5:** Involve county residents in economic development.

**3.5.A.** Consider "neighborhood planning" for sub-areas of the county to identify geography-specific development strategies.

**Objective 3.6:** Explore the feasibility of a County-wide recycling program.

**3.6.A.** Invite recycling industry representatives to explore



the logistical feasibility, economic feasibility, and level of interest for a county-wide recycling program.

**Objective 3.7:** Explore applications of tax increment financing districts in unincorporated county areas.

## **Goal 4. Cooperation with Other Governments**

**Work cooperatively for the benefit of County residents with unincorporated communities, local governments in the county, and state and federal government agencies planning activities in the county that could affect Carbon County residents.**

**Objective 4.1:** Direct development to existing communities.

**4.1.A.** Coordinate the review of subdivision and development permit applications within one mile of incorporated community boundar-

ies, or in any cases where municipal services are being requested.

**4.1.B.** Organize a session for members of all planning boards or public works directors in the county to identify issues of mutual concern, and receive training.

**4.1.C.** Urge incorporated towns and cities to adopt annexation and extension of services plans that include county coordination.

**Objective 4.2:** Minimize unintentional consequences of local government policies with respect to development patterns.

**4.2.A.** Encourage infill to take advantage of existing services, facilities, and infrastructure by monitoring local government actions to ensure consistency between municipal and county policies where possible.

**4.2.B.** Maintain up-to-date subdivision and development permit regulations for use by the county and those communities without separate planning boards.

**Objective 4.3:** Provide the most cost-effective services to residents for road maintenance and construction with cooperating jurisdictions.

**4.3.A.** Communicate with MDT, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and adjacent counties to discuss road projects, coordinate schedules, and look for efficiencies through working cooperatively.

**4.3.B.** Continue to work with MDT on the construction/reconstruction projects on Highways 212, 78, 72, and 310. Coordinate with MDT on residential development planning in the north end of the county for commuters to Billings that utilize Highway

212.

**Objective 4.4:** Promote the public health and safety through cooperation with the state and federal governments.

**4.4.A.** Continue to administer the Disaster Emergency Services program in the county. Utilize state funds and training to support county DES program.

**4.4.B.** Continue to work with the Forest Service to educate the public about dangers and challenges associated with the continued growth and building within the Wildland/Urban interface. Support rural departments applying for state and federal grant monies for staffing, training, and equipment. Update the Community Wildfire Protection Plan as necessary.

**4.4.C.** As appropriate, request the Montana Department of Transportation to conduct

studies of traffic safety on highways in the county.

**4.4.D.** Coordinate to ensure proper access and approach to sensitive irrigated agricultural lands.

## **Goal 5. Natural and Environmental Resources**

**Develop the county's natural resources balancing economic development with environmental responsibility.**

**Objective 5.1:** Leverage natural resource development to promote economic and community development.

**5.1.A.** Partner and communicate with oil, gas, wind, or other resource developers to identify best practices for exploration and development.

**5.1.B.** Promote renewable resource development.

**Objective 5.2:** Promote policies and strategies to mitigate

potential impacts without deterring natural resource development

**5.2.A.** Coordinate with landowners to enable citizen-initiated zoning districts (enabled through MCA 76-2-101) to mitigate potential impacts from natural resource development.

**5.2.B.** Consider possible impact mitigation policies in the development regulations.

**5.2.C.** Coordinate with industry, landowners, and local leaders to promote "good neighbor" strategies.



# 7 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

The Implementation Framework provides actions and completion timeframes for action items that implement the vision and goals of the growth policy.

**Goal, Objective**

<b>or Action</b>	<b>Task Description Summary</b>	<b>Completion Timeframe</b>
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Land Use and Development</b>	
1.1.A	Revise subdivision regulations--Revisions as necessary to address strategies	Annually, Ongoing
1.1.B	Revise development regulations	1 year
1.1.C	Develop a system to track the approvals process	1 year
1.2.A	Complete a build-out analysis	Prior to next growth policy update
1.2.B	Track number of acres of agricultural land converted to residential development	1 year
1.3.A	Make resources available to assist residents with Part 2 zoning	Ongoing
1.3.B	Revise the subdivision regulations (see pg. 49)	6 months
1.3.C	Make the "Code of the West" available	Ongoing
1.3.D	Provide referral information on conservation easements	Ongoing
1.4.A	Encourage cluster development	Ongoing
1.5.A	Comment on state and federal undertakings	Ongoing
1.5.B	Develop recommendations on historic preservation	Prior to next growth policy update
1.5.C	Coordination with MDOT	Ongoing
1.6.A	Encourage open space and habitat dedications for parkland requirements	1 year
1.6.B	Obtain input from Montana FWP	Ongoing



<b>Goal, Objective or Action</b>	<b>Task Description Summary</b>	<b>Completion Timeframe</b>
1.7.A	Potential for future land use mapping	Prior to next growth policy update
1.8.A	Guide review of telecommunication towers	Ongoing
1.8.B	Consider telecommunications tower ordinance	1 year
<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Water Resource Management</b>	
2.1.A	Compile and study groundwater science	2 years
2.1.B	Seek grants for well and septic system data countywide	Prior to next growth policy update
2.2.A	Identify public water/sewer system thresholds	Prior to next growth policy update
2.3.A	Revise subdivision regulations	1 year
2.4.A	Aide in securing grants for capital projects	Ongoing
2.4.B	Coordinate water/sewer training needs	Ongoing
2.5.A	Invite DEQ to present on wellhead protection	2 years
2.5.B	Apply for grants to complete wellhead protection projects	2 years
2.6.A	Revise floodplain regulations to comply with state and federal policy updates	As needed
2.6.B	Coordinate with joint floodplain permitting agencies	Ongoing
2.6.C	Consider stream development setbacks	1 year
<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Financial Management and Public Services</b>	
3.1.A	Perform an impact fee study	1 year
3.1.B	Discuss demands on infrastructure with industry	Ongoing
3.1.C	Coordinate with industry to mitigate transportation impacts	Ongoing
3.1.D	Identify incentives that minimize county costs	6 months
3.1.E	Review/update planning fees	As needed
3.1.F	Review/update weed bond fees	As needed
3.2.A	Complete rural addressing and E911 system	Ongoing
3.2.B	Update the EOP	1 year

**Goal, Objective**

<b>or Action</b>	<b>Task Description Summary</b>	<b>Completion Timeframe</b>
3.2.C	Develop level of service standards for emergency response services	1 year
3.3.A	Prepare a CIP	Prior to next growth policy update
3.3.B	Review and revise private road policy	Prior to next growth policy update
3.3.C	Assess county-owned buildings	2 years
3.3.D	Inventory known county roads	Ongoing
3.3.E	Update county road maintenance priority map	Ongoing
3.3.F	Inventory and assess bridges	6 months
3.3.G	Pursue resources available from MACo and the MT DOC to complete water/sewer improvement projects	Ongoing
3.3.H	Consider full-time public works positions	6 months
3.4.A	Continue participation in Beartooth RC&D	Ongoing
3.4.B	Continue participation in Beartooth Economic Development District	Ongoing
3.4.C	Apply for state/federal grants for infrastructure projects and technical assistance	Ongoing
3.5.A	Consider neighborhood planning	1 year
3.6.A	Invite recycling industry reps to discuss recycling program feasibility	1 year
<b>Goal 4</b>	<b>Cooperation with Other Governments</b>	
4.1.A	Coordinate subdivision and development permit application review within one mile of incorporated places	Ongoing
4.1.B	Identify mutual areas of concern	Ongoing
4.1.C	Encourage extension of services planning	1 year
4.2.A	Encourage infill development	Ongoing
4.2.B	Update and administer subdivision regs for unincorporated areas	1 year
4.3.A	Communicate with other agencies regarding road projects	Ongoing
4.3.B	Continue coordination with MDOT on all highway projects	Ongoing
4.4.A	Utilize state funds to administer DES program	Ongoing

**Goal, Objective**

<b>or Action</b>	<b>Task Description Summary</b>	<b>Completion Timeframe</b>
4.4.B	Coordinate with USFS on wildfire danger	Ongoing
4.4.C	Request MDOT traffic studies where appropriate	As needed
4.4.D	Ensure proper access and approach to sensitive agricultural lands	Ongoing
<b>Goal 5</b>	<b>Natural and Environmental Resources</b>	
5.1.A	Partner and communicate with developers to identify best practices	Ongoing
5.1.B	Promote renewable energy development	Ongoing
5.2.A	Coordinate with landowners to enable citizen-initiated zoning districts	Ongoing
5.2.B	Consider impact mitigation policies in development regulations	6 months
5.2.C	Coordinate to promote “good neighbor” strategies	Ongoing

**Development Regulations**

The county adopted the development permitting system in 1981 to manage any change in use from agricultural, residential, or recreational to commercial or industrial. The Development Regulations are adopted under MCA 76-2 Part 2 “County Zoning”.

Future updates to the development regulations should consider the impacts of natural resources development on the

public health, safety or welfare, and should enable such impacts to be mitigated.

**Subdivision Regulations**

The review of subdivision and the regulations that govern the review process affects the ability of the local government to achieve the growth policy’s goals. Since 1974, every county, city, and town has been required by state law to “adopt and provide for the enforcement and administration of subdivision

regulations.” The governing bodies have also had the authority to review subdivisions for their compliance with master planning documents. House Bill 543, passed by the 2001 state legislature and signed into law by the governor, now requires that subdivision regulations be revised to be in accordance with the growth policy within one year of its adoption.

This section provides information on how the county will review subdivisions. It

explains:

1. How the county defines the state’s review criteria,
2. How those criteria will be used to evaluate and make decisions on subdivisions, and
3. How public hearings will be conducted.

**Criteria Definition**

State law requires that subdivisions be reviewed for

their effects on six primary criteria: agriculture, agricultural water user facilities, natural environment, wildlife and wildlife habitat, local services and public health and safety. This section clarifies how the county defines those criteria.

Agriculture: The use of the land for grazing and cropping to produce food, feed, and fiber commodities. Examples may include: cultivation and tillage of the soil; dairying; growing and harvesting of agricultural or horticultural commodities; and the raising of livestock, bees, fur-bearing animals, or poultry. This definition does not include concentrated animal feeding operations.

Agricultural water user facilities: Facilities that provide water for the production of agricultural products on agricultural land including, but not limited to ditches, canals, pipes, head gates, sprinkler systems, tanks,

reservoir, ponds, or developed springs.

Local services: Any and all services or facilities local government is authorized to provide, such as water supply, sewage disposal, law enforcement, fire protection, transportation system, and educational system as well as services not provided by local government such as electricity, gas, telephone, and solid waste disposal.

Natural environment: Existing physical conditions relating to land, water, air, plant and animal life of an area and the interrelationship of those elements, such as soils, geology, topography, vegetation, surface water, ground water, aquifers, drainage patterns, recharge areas, climate, floodplains, noise, scenic resources, and objects of historic, prehistoric, cultural, or aesthetic significance.

Wildlife: Animals (e.g. mammals,

birds, reptiles, fish), that are not domesticated, existing in their natural environment.

Wildlife habitat: Geographic areas containing physical or biological features essential to wildlife for breeding, rearing, nesting, and/or winter feeding and forage; and/or essential to the conservation of listed endangered and threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

Public health and safety: A condition of optimal well being, free from danger, risk, or injury for a community at large, or for all people, as well as for the welfare of a specific individual or a small class of persons.

### **Evaluation**

The evaluation of the effect of the proposed subdivision on these six criteria determines if there are significant unmitigated adverse impacts. Unmitigated adverse impacts are potential

grounds for denial of a proposed subdivision. Below are examples of items considered in evaluating the impact of a proposed subdivision on the six primary criteria. These examples do not necessarily reflect all potential items. Depending on the proposed subdivision, some of these items may not apply. In addition, some proposals may require evaluation of other factors not included in these examples to weigh the subdivision's effect on these criteria. It is the subdivider's responsibility to document proposed mitigation of any adverse impacts on these six criteria.

### **Effect on agriculture.**

- Number of acres that would be removed from the production of crops or livestock.
- Acres of prime farmland (as defined by the USDA) that would be removed



- Effect on use of remainder and adjoining properties as farm or ranch land
- Potential conflicts between the proposed subdivision and adjacent agricultural operations including:
  - » Interference with movement of livestock or farm machinery
  - » Maintenance of fences
  - » Weed proliferation
  - » Vandalism or theft
  - » Harassment of livestock by pets or humans
- Other items to be considered include:
  - » Effect on market value of surrounding land
  - » Net effect on taxes resulting from additional services

**Effect on agricultural water user facilities.**

- Location and proximity to agricultural water user facilities
  - Potential conflicts between facility users and subdivision residents including:
    - » Seeps, flooding, washouts,
    - » Obstructions and interference
    - » Unintended uses (recreation or landscaping)
  - Water rights
  - Vehicular access to facility
- Effect on local services.**
- Increased demand on services and need to expand services
  - Ability to provide services to subdivision
    - » Response times
    - » Conditions of roads,

bridges, and railroad crossings

» Physical Barriers.

- Provision of adequate local services and public facilities simultaneous or prior to onset of impact
- Any special or rural improvement districts that would obligate local government involvement fiscally or administratively

**Effect on natural environment.**

- Runoff reaching surface waters (e.g., streams, rivers or riparian areas).
- Impacts on ground water quantity and quality.
- Impacts on air quality.
- Impacts on scenic resources.
- Impacts on historic, prehistoric, and cultural resources
- Noxious weeds.

- Wetlands not covered under nationwide permits.

**Effect on wildlife and wildlife habitat.**

- Loss of significant, important and critical habitat, as defined by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- Impacts on significant, important and critical habitat including potential effects of
  - » roads and traffic
  - » closure of existing operations and/or potential to provide new access to public lands
  - » Effects of humans and pets on wildlife.

**Effect on public health and safety.**

- Creation of potential man-made hazards (e.g. unsafe road intersection, development in wildland

- urban interface fire areas).
- Natural hazards (e.g. wildfire, flooding, steep slopes).
- Existing potential man-made hazards (e.g. high pressure gas lines, lack of fire protection, cumulative impacts).
- Traffic safety.
- Emergency vehicle access.
- Emergency medical response time.
- Condition of road leading to proposed subdivision.
- Condition of bridges on road leading to proposed subdivision.
- Any other item that endangers public health and safety.

### Public Hearing Procedures

A fundamental component of the subdivision review process is the opportunity for members

of the public and interested groups to offer comments on the proposal. The opportunity to make comments in public is provided by the public hearing process. The Planning Board will also accept written comment received outside of the public hearing, but may set deadlines for the receipt of such comment. Under state law, the requirement to hold a public hearing does not apply to the first minor subdivision from a tract of record. A minor subdivision is defined as containing five or fewer lots.

The general steps for the public hearing, which is conducted by the Planning Board in Carbon County, are as follows:

1. Introduce public hearing.
2. Explain subdivision review procedure and decision criteria.
3. Planning Department staff report.

4. Applicant presentation.
5. Public testimony.
6. Close public hearing.

Court decisions have held that public meetings that extend late into the night are not really accessible to the general public. The meeting should be conducted so that those who want to speak for or against, or who seek additional information, will have an opportunity to do so while still providing a reasonable adjournment time.

The Planning Board Chair, who presides over the meeting, is responsible for setting the guidelines or methods for public comment. The Chair will review general guidelines prior to public comment, reminding the public of the criteria upon which the final decision must be made. Because each meeting is somewhat different, a standardized set of guidelines may not work in every case.

Options to manage public discussion can include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Asking those who wish to speak to sign in, and use the list to call on speakers.
- Limiting the amount of time each person can speak.
- Allowing each person to speak only once until all have had an opportunity.
- Requesting individuals to address new issues only and not repeat what has already been addressed.

The planning board will vote on the subdivision application after the public hearing is adjourned. Their decision will be forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners as a formal recommendation.

## Implementation and Amendment of the Growth Policy

### Timetable for implementing the growth policy

The growth policy shall be implemented according to the implementation measures listed under each goal and objective in the Implementation Framework.

### A list of conditions that will lead to revision of the Growth Policy

To remain a useful tool for guiding land use development in the county, this growth policy will need to be periodically updated. The following conditions will trigger a revision of the growth policy.

The passage of five years from adoption;

Legislative changes which mandate significant additions, corrections, or amendments to the growth policy;

Changed conditions including but not limited to litigation in Carbon County or elsewhere in Montana which sets legal precedent clearly contrary to stated goals, objectives and strategies in the County's growth policy.

### A timetable for reviewing the growth policy

The Carbon County growth policy shall be revised at a minimum every five years from the most recent date of adoption. Review may occur more frequently than five years if one or more of the conditions that lead to a revision of the growth policy listed above occur. The County Planning Board shall be responsible for reviewing the growth policy and making recommendations for changes to the goals, objectives, and implementation measures.

### Amending the Growth Policy

Amendment of the growth

policy may occur as recommended by the County Planning Board. Triggers which could cause the County Planning Board to recommend amendment could include, but are not necessarily limited to; a determination that an issue was not adequately addressed in the growth policy or an issue arising which was not contemplated in the growth policy.

The process by which the growth policy will be amended is as follows;

1. An issue or deficiency is identified to the Planning Board by a member of the Planning Board, the Board of County Commissioners, the County Planner, or a local government member.
2. The Planning Board has oversight responsibility for language proposed for any amendments of the growth policy.

3. Prior to the submission of the proposed amendment to the governing body, the board shall give notice and hold a public hearing on the growth policy. At least 10 days prior to the date set for hearing, the board shall publish in a newspaper of general circulation in the jurisdictional area a notice of the time and place of the hearing.

4. The Planning Board conducts a public hearing on the proposed amendment and votes on whether to recommend that the Board of County Commissioners adopt the amendment.

5. Within 60 days of the vote of the Planning Board and not less than 30 days, the Board of County Commissioners votes to accept or reject the recommendation from the Planning Board.

## Application for Growth Policy Amendment

### Description of Amendment

Elements of growth policy to be amended:

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Summary of proposed amendment:

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**Provide or attach the following in a narrative format with any maps or drawings as needed. Please demonstrate:**

- How or where an error was made in the growth policy that requires an amendment to preserve a property right or to preserve equal protection under the law:

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- How or where conditions in the city have changed to a degree that requires an amendment to the growth policy:

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- How the amendment furthers the visions, goals, or objectives in the growth policy: \_\_\_\_\_

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- How the proposed amendment will provide clear, community benefit: \_\_\_\_\_

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I hereby certify under penalty of perjury and the laws of the State of Montana that the information submitted herein, on all other submitted forms, documents, plans or any other information submitted as a part of this application, to be true, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. Should any information or representation submitted in connection with this application be untrue, I understand that any approval based thereon may be rescinded and other appropriate action taken. The signing of this application signifies approval for Carbon County staff to be present on the property for routine monitoring and inspection during the approval and development process.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Applicant's Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**