2016

TETON COUNTY, MT

GROWTH POLICY

Adopted: May 5, 2016

Effective Date: June 5, 2016

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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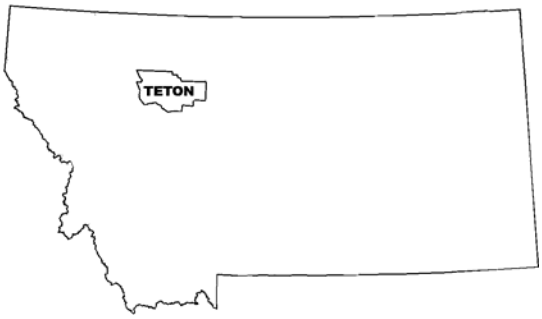


OVERVIEW

Consider the treasures, the character, the richness and the complexities of Teton County. It is located along the eastern front of the Rocky Mountains with the Lewis and Clark National Forest and majestic mountain peaks comprising the western most portion of the County. The forested habitat, home to grizzly bears and mountain goats, gives way to the dramatic landscape of the great plains. Dinosaurs once roamed this same land and the wealth of fossil remains in the County are indicative of the rich natural heritage of this area.

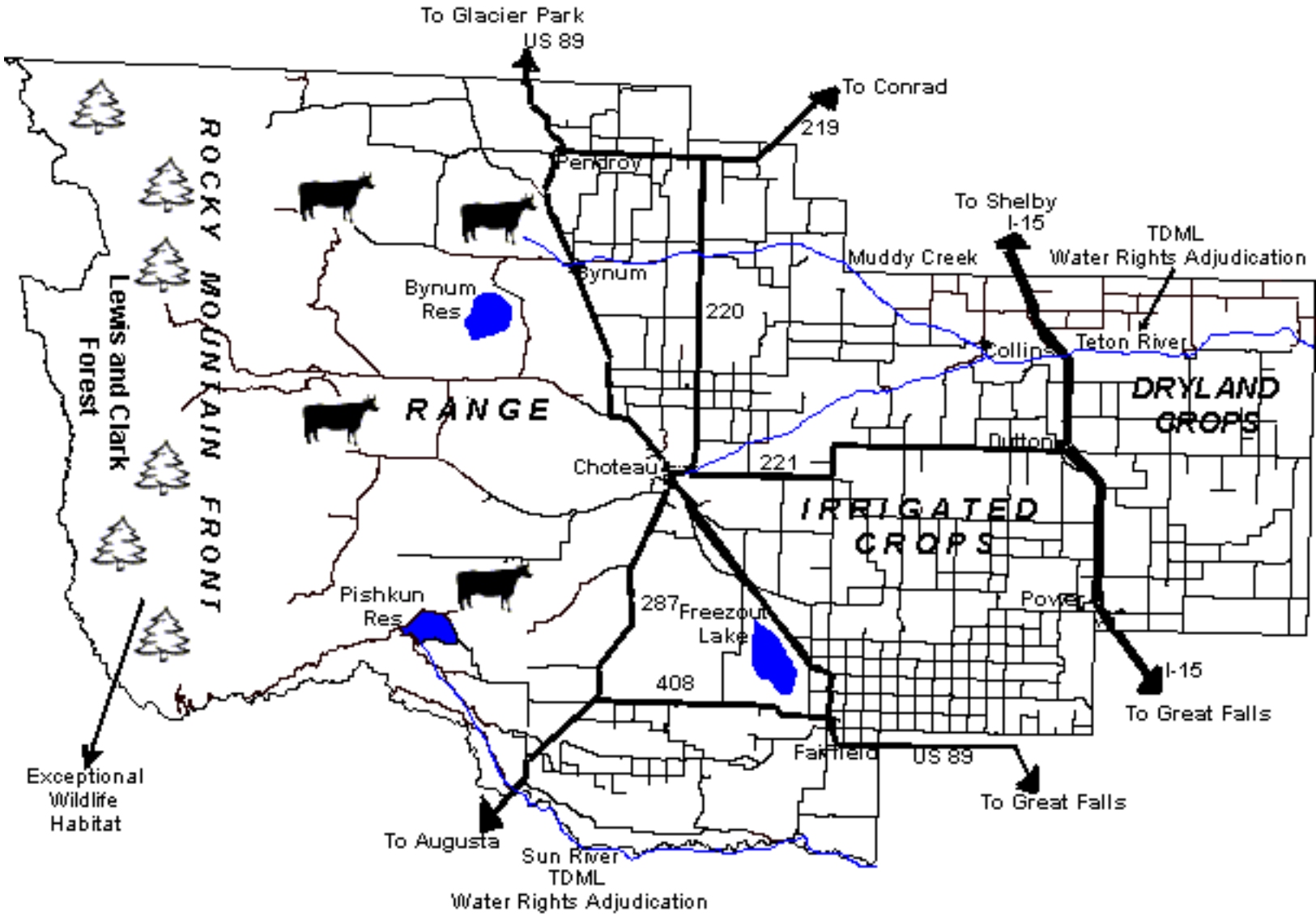
The County also has a rich agricultural heritage with irrigated cropland producing barley, wheat and hay and traditional ranch operations that still have ties to early settlers. Remnants of rail towns scattered throughout the county are symbols of the hopes and dreams of previous generations. High-speed grain elevators and Interstates highways have replaced these remote by-ways and remind one that change is constant and that tradition is always being challenged by a host of national and regional trends.

Nationally, the agricultural economy has been suffering and more producers rely on second incomes to supplement their operations. As this generation nears retirement, development of the land may be an attractive alternative. Technology has allowed some diversification in the economy with a growing telecommunications company located in Fairfield. The small town ambience also attracts lone-eagles and commuters that work in nearby Great Falls while tourists discover the area's charms as they pass through on their way to Glacier National Park.

Yet with all it has to offer, it remains paradise primarily undiscovered. While many counties in Montana have experienced double-digit growth over the last decade, Teton County's population has remained unchanged for the last 20 years and is still less than the peak population of 1970. With only 2.8 persons per square mile, the need for a growth policy plan may seem less urgent than other places in Montana. For precisely this reason, Teton County is in an enviable position.

Teton County is planning for it's future and laying the groundwork for mechanisms to manage change in advance of the explosive growth that other counties in the State have experienced. Inevitably, Teton County will be discovered and when new subdivisions beckon to urban refugees, Teton County will be prepared to guide this growth in a manner that will preserve the character that generations have come to cherish.

Figure 1: Teton County Issues Map



Prepared by: Applied Communications, October 2002

PLANNING BACKGROUND

1. Teton County History

Prior to permanent settlement, the Pikuni, Piegan-Blackfoot buffalo hunters, controlled areas along the Rocky Mountain front. In 1867, the U.S. Government established the military post of Fort Shaw a few miles south of Fairfield on the Sun River. The first permanent settlers were squatters and cattlemen who located near the military forts and trading posts at Fort Shaw, Choteau, and Dupuyer.

The town of Choteau was originally named Old Agency and had served as reservation headquarters prior to the establishment of the Blackfoot Reservation in 1885. The Old Agency settlement was located three and one-half miles north of the present townsite. In 1876, A.B. Hamilton and his partner Isaac Hazlett moved their store to the present town site and the Old Agency site on the Teton River was abandoned. The Choteau townsite was laid out in 1883 and The initial vote to incorporate the City of Choteau in 1894 failed. The City did not become incorporated until 1913.

Teton County was formed on March 1, 1893 from a portion of Chouteau County, with the town of Choteau as the county seat. Teton County was later subdivided when Toole, Galcier, and Pondera Counties were formed.

Early stockman introduced irrigation in the stream valleys and lower benches in the 1880's and 1890's but was significantly expanded with the development of the Greenfield Irrigation District. The District provides irrigation water for approximately 80,000 acres of land. Water is stored in Gibson Reservoir, Willow Reservoir and Pishkun Reservoir. Development of the reservoirs, canals and distribution system occurred from 1904 to 1936.

The town of Fairfield is the second largest community in Teton County and sprang out of economic activity related to the Greenfield District of the Sun River Irrigation Project. Dutton, located on the Burlington Northern Branch line in the eastern part of the county, is the third largest town. Prior to 1910 it was only a railroad siding named after a Great Northern Railway freight agent. Other towns are unincorporated communities that originated as grain shipping points located on railroad branch lines. They include Bynum, Collins, Farmington, Pendroy and Power.

2. Teton County Planning History

Teton County adopted a "Comprehensive Development Plan" for Teton County in 1981. Subsequently, the County adopted a Development Permit System in 1982 for commercial and industrial uses and updated the Subdivision Regulations in 1983. Although these regulatory documents codified many of the policies in the Comprehensive Plan the development review process still relied on many standards established only in the planning goals and policies.

Since 1981 the State of Montana has amended the Montana Code several times related to planning and subdivisions. In 1993, significant changes in the law changed the definition of

subdivision from "parcels less than 20 acres in size" to "parcels less than 160 acres". A number of exemptions were also eliminated with the result being that more development activity was subject to local subdivision review.

In 1999, the Montana Legislature passed an act changing the terms "master plan" and "comprehensive plan" to "growth policy". The act also established minimum requirements for preparation of growth policies. The legislation continued to allow counties to adopt this planning document on a voluntary basis.

Although this legislation provided clearer direction on the requirements for adopting a growth policy, there were still concerns about how local governments were using growth policies in the development review process. There were specific concerns about the legality of approving or denying subdivisions based on vague or ambiguous policies in the Growth Policy Plan. Due to these concerns, the 2001 Legislature amended the Subdivision Platting act to require:

> *"When a growth policy has been approved, the subdivision REGULATIONS ADOPTED PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 3 OF THIS TITLE MUST BE MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH the growth policy."*

As a result of these legislative changes, it became a high priority for all counties to update their Plans to comply with the 1999 legislation and provide clear policy direction that can be reflected in updated land use regulations.

In addition to these legislative changes, the western part of the State of Montana has experienced rapid population growth in the last decade. Counties found that regulations that were adopted 20 to 30 years ago were inadequate to address many concerns related to development. Community character, infrastructure costs, providing local services to new subdivisions, and compatibility of uses are some of the issues that have resulted in high growth areas. To deal with these issues, new planning tools have emerged that can help counties manage growth and promote sustainable development.

The combination of legislative changes, concern about potential development issues, and the opportunity to incorporate new planning techniques in the plan, prompted this current update of the 1981 plan. This 2003 plan represented Teton County's desire to provide for future development that is cost efficient to serve, that will preserve the rural character of the county and that will protect the unique natural resources of the area.

Following the adoption of the 2003 Growth Policy, the county updated the subdivision regulations to be consistent with the recommendations of the Growth Policy and to reflect changes in Montana Code Annotated enabling legislation. Additionally, the County undertook an effort to adopt a development permit system. Development permit systems are authorized as zoning under Chapter 76 of the Montana Code Annotated. The proposed development permit system established a limited regulatory system that included regulations for billboards and provisions to make a few land uses allowable as conditional uses. The Development permit system was not adopted due to opposition during the Planning Board public hearing.

The Growth Policy was updated in 2015 provides a vision for the County that indicates how it wants to develop and make public investments over the next 20 years. It analyzes land use, natural resources, public facilities, local services, population, economics, and housing to identify local issues and devise appropriate policies that will address those issues in a manner consistent with this vision. It provides the long-range focus to help decision-makers set priorities and evaluate whether development proposals are consistent with this vision. It is a tool to coordinate with other government agencies and to communicate to citizens and developers the vision of the community. The Plan provides the framework for regulatory updates, land use decisions, and public investments and will be an invaluable resource for the County as it enters the 21srt Century.

PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process for the Growth Policy 2003 plan, began in the fall of 2001 with the formation of a Steering Committee to oversee preparation of the plan. The Committee met periodically over the two years of the plan with interested citizens attending the initial meetings. The Committee reviewed draft chapters of the County data profile, established direction for the goals and policies, and commented on all components of the plan.

Initially, the Steering Committee set out to update the goals and policies 1981 plan. After a number of meetings it determined that to properly address the issues and new trends that have emerged over the last 20 years, a complete rewrite of the plan would be required. The County hired a consultant in the Fall of 2002 to assist with the process.

In addition to the Steering Committee, the County partnered with the University of Montana to conduct a survey to solicit input regarding land use issues and various policy alternatives. The survey was mailed to over 600 residents and the response rate of over 80% indicated a high interest in the plan. This input was a valuable tool in crafting the goals and policies. (See appendix for survey results.) Throughout the two years of work by the Steering Committee, the local newspaper provided coverage of the various steps in the planning process. Following is a summary of the major steps in the planning process.

1. County awarded Community Development Block Grant to complete Growth Policy Plan. (Summer 2000)

2. Steering Committee created with representatives from County Planning Board, each of the three incorporated towns and a cross section of interest in the County. (Fall 2000)

3. Consultant hired to work with Steering Committee in preparation of plan. (Sept. 2001)

4. Survey mailed to over 600 voters in random sample and there was an 83% response rate. (January 2002)

5. Review draft of plan completed. (December 2002)

6. Plan adoption by County Commission (Spring 2003)

7. Planning Board conducts workshops to update plan. (Spring 2015 thru fall 2015)

8. Growth Policy on-line survey (May 2015 thru July 2015)

9. Growth Policy update adopted, January 2015

The Plan is a dynamic document that represents a continuous process of setting goals and establishing priorities on actions to achieve those goals. This Plan provides for periodic updates and review of the plan. These updates will allow the County to reflect changing conditions and take advantage of new opportunities.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Tip 1: Where to find Data & Statistics

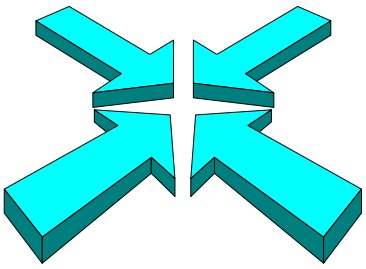
The County Profile section contains the data that was compiled for the plan. The data comes from census information as well as State and local agencies. A detail reference section is at the end of the County Profile and list the sources for the data. For additional information consult these sources.

Tip 2: Locating Goals & Policies

The goals and policies are derived primarily from issues that emerged from the information that was compiled for the County Profile. The Goals and Policy subjects have the same heading as the county profile section in this document. To locate a policy that may deal with a particular issue, it might be helpful to browse through the table of contents for the county profile section. The goal or policy will likely be located under the same heading as the topic in the profile.

Tip 3: Copies of the Plan

Copies of the plan will be located at each of the public libraries in the County. Upon adoption of the plan, it is the intent of the County to have electronic files of the plan on the County web site for. Additionally, the County Planning Department can make copies of all or part of the plan with a charge to cover the copy costs.



Goals & Policies

"Development policy statements should emerge from a process of identifying planning issues, problems and assets, and from formulating goal and objective statements."

A Primer on Land Use Planning and Regulation for Local Governments, Montana Department of Commerce Community Technical Assistance Program

Goals and policy provide the framework for the Growth Management Policy Plan. They present the community's values and are a guide for comparing alternatives, setting priorities, and measuring progress of various programs. Goals and policies each represent a different level of detail. Goals flow from identification of planning issues to a general goal statement that describes what the County is striving towards to specific policies that can be translated to action. Following are some common definitions of Goals and Policies.

Goal: A goal is the most general statement and sets the broad framework for objectives and policies. It provides the overall vision of what the community is striving for.

Policy: Policy statements represent specific actions. A policy is more detailed than an objective and can readily be translated into a specific action or program.

POPULATION & ECONOMICS

Issue 1.1: Teton County is experiencing slow to no population growth. Additionally, the composition of the population is changing with a growing senior population that reflects the aging of the baby boom and longer life spans. The lack of population growth combined with the fixed incomes of an aging population, could result in an increased tax burden to meet the demands of needed infrastructure upgrades. There is difficulty in keeping and attracting young families to the area.

With a current countywide population of 6,445 people a 1% increase per year would result in an increase of 673 persons over 10 years while a 2% increase per year would produce a population of 1,411 over 10 years. With an average household size of 2.5, this would require between 67 to 140 new housing units per year to accommodate a growing population. This would be in addition to the 10 to 15 houses per year that are added to the housing stock as seasonal homes or to replace older units. Most of the new housing construction in the past decade took place in the unincorporated areas.

Goal A:	Promote sustainable population growth that will provide a base to support businesses and schools at a rate that local government can plan and provide for services.
Policies :	1. Coordinate with public infrastructure policies to support growth. 2. For planning purposes set a growth target of 1 to 2% increase in population per year. 3. Identify areas in County that are desirable for growth & target capital improvements for these areas. 4. Market the quality of life factors to attract new residents.

Goal B:	Provide the means for young adults from Teton County to remain in the area, attract young families that represent the future of the community and provide appropriate services for people of all ages.
Policies :	1. Work with schools to keep in touch with graduates. 2. Review needs of young families to identify service gaps. 3. Actively engage young adults in community leadership positions. 4. Work with local agencies to promote activities and entertainment for youth. 5. Design facilities and services to accommodate people of all ages and abilities.

Issue 1.2: Teton County has experienced a growth in jobs and has diversified its economic base to include higher-than-statewide percentages of jobs in wholesale, trade, transportation and public utilities. Job growth, however, has outpaced population growth. This may be the result of residents holding more than one job to replace lower income from traditional agricultural sources and spouses working to supplement farm income. Highway 89 goes through Teton County and is a major route to Glacier National Park. It could attract more stops by tourist.

Goal A:	Promote economic development that supports the agriculture sector of the economy and existing businesses.
Policies :	1. Target value-added agriculture for economic development. 2. Support entrepreneur training and programs. 3. Help identify alternative income sources. 4. Periodically survey existing businesses to identify needs. 5. Coordinate with local economic develop agencies on business retention efforts. 6. Support main street business and promote niche markets for local products. 7. Monitor the Farm Service agency study of the effects of the Conservation Reserve Program on rural economies. 8. Partner with landowners, finance institutions, public and non-profit sector to develop programs to support family farms.

Goal B:	Continue to diversity the economic base with industries that do not threaten the rural lifestyle and or create a strain on public services.
Policies :	1. Target economic development efforts towards clean industries or industry that uses sustainable development techniques. 2. Coordinate with local, regional and State economic development programs. 3. Cultivate new economy businesses such as telecommunications, alternative energy, Internet, and home office workers. 4. Develop tourism and heritage resources to capture more tourist dollars that are traveling to Glacier Park. 5. Minimize environmental impacts of resource extraction industries. 6. Coordinate with economic development with land use and public infrastructure policies. 7. Amend existing regulation to include performance standards for potential nuisances from commercial and industrial developments.

II. HOUSING

Issue 2.1: Teton County has a tight housing market with less than one percent of the total housing units in fair or better condition available for new occupants. Persons on limited income have the most difficulty meeting their housing needs. There are limited housing assistance programs and the ones that are in place have waiting lists. Additionally, the percent of unsound/poor housing in the County exceeds the State average and contributes to the low availability of housing units. Although some areas, such as Collins, is experiencing job growth, there are no housing units in the area for workers creating longer commutes.

Goal A:	Expand housing stock through to meet the needs of first time homebuyers, low to moderate income.
Policies :	1. Coordinate with local governments and public agencies to expand programs for homebuyers and low to moderate income families. 2. Promote in-fill development to capitalize on existing infrastructure. 3. Focus planning and capital improvement efforts around population centers. 4. Conduct housing needs assessment in unincorporated areas settlements and determine potential for rehabilitation grants. 5. Coordinate with cities to inventory housing stock in order to target areas for rehabilitation and demolition.

Issue 2.2: Although population growth will not generate new demand for additional housing units, the changing population composition will create demand for housing types that include starter homes, rental units, and senior care housing.

Goal A:	Develop a variety of housing types to meet the needs of the changing population.
Policies :	1. Encourage efficient residential land development patterns such as cluster developments and neo-traditional developments. 2. Promote development of multi-family rental units in incorporated areas near services. 3. Target expansion and development of housing for seniors such as assisted living centers and active retirement communities. 4. Identify areas in the County to promote developments with a mix of housing types and price range. (Single family, townhouse, apartments, accessory units …). 5. Work with cities on possibility of second floor rental units above businesses.

LAND USE

Issue 3.1: The western part of the County is characterized by forested mountain ranges with exceptional scenic, wildlife, recreation, paleontological, and natural resource values. Much of the land is under Federal and State ownership and management decisions must be coordinated with private land and community concerns.

Goal A:	Work with all stakeholders to develop approaches that allow compatible uses along the Rocky Mountain Front while protecting the outstanding natural heritage of the area.
Policies :	1. Actively participate in planning efforts for Lewis and Clark Forest. 2. Include outreach efforts to all landowners in the area to involve in planning decisions. 3. Consult with public, non-profit agencies, and resource management with area of proposed development early in review stages. 4. Conduct additional study or area plan to collect planning data, identify threats to natural heritage, identify and compatible land use activities and strategies such as conservation easements. 5. Work on consensus building among stakeholders to develop strategies for the area.

Issue 3.2: Agricultural land use is the main contributor to the local economy and reflects the rural quality of life that is attractive to most people in the County. Agricultural trends, however, are putting pressure on agricultural operators to take land out of production. These include a decrease in farm income, an increase in the average age of farmers and development pressures.

Goal A:	Preserve agricultural land and promote an environment for successful agricultural operations
Policies :	1. Coordinate with right-to-farm protections in Montana Code. 2. Discourage developments that interfere with agricultural operations. 3. Identify productive agricultural lands and target for agricultural preservation programs. 4. Coordinate with State and Federal agencies to promote sustainable agricultural practices. 5. Provide information regarding conservation easements and other incentives to preserve agricultural land. 6. Consult with farmers and ranchers to identify issues and strategies to promote viable operations.

Issue 3.3: Significant new development encounters issues of adequate services such as roads, water, and solid waste as well as impact on agriculture, wildlife, sensitive areas and other quality of life factors. Appropriate sites for development in or near incorporated areas are limited.

Goal A:	Promote development that has adequate services and does not add to the tax burden for existing land owners.
Policies :	1. Promote land development in and around incorporated areas that can provide services and discourage inefficient land use patterns that make it difficult to provide public services. 2. Review feasibility of requirements for adequate facilities ordinance and sustainable development techniques. 3. Include provisions in subdivision reviews to participate in current or future special improvement districts or other funding mechanisms to pay for infrastructure and services. 4. Require information on improvement guarantees and conditions of approval to be indicated on the subdivision plat. 5. Consult with local agencies to determine the impact of development and make sure all requirements are being met.

Goal B:	Promote development that is compatible with existing land uses, protects small town character and that minimizes negative impacts.
Policies :	1. Impacts of development should be confined to the site (parking, noise, glare, dust, …..) or mitigated such with techniques such as buffers between different types of land uses. 2. Review development standards to determine if they are adequate to meet health and safety concerns. 3. Preserve floodplains and wetlands to protect property and minimize impact on the environment. 4. Amend development regulations to preserve rural character with provisions for density, signs, open space, billboards and other features. 5. Give consideration to municipal growth policies to identify areas that are most appropriate for growth within the unincorporated portions of the growth policy planning area. 6. Coordinate development review with different local, state and federal agencies that are involved in various aspects of development or may be affected by new development. 7. Work with state agencies and land owners to identify brownfields and provide education on programs to clean-up contaminated properties.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Issue 4.1: The Teton and Sun Rivers are both listed as impaired water bodies. Weeds, run-off, flow and habitat alteration and siltation are problems. Watershed groups representing multiple parties have been successful in developing plans and implementing projects to improve water quality and quantity.

Goal A:	Improve the overall water quality of the major rivers and streams in Teton County and improve water availability to users along these water corridors.
Policies :	1. Support efforts by watershed planning groups through involvement, consultation, technical assistance, and partnerships on projects 2. Notify and request input from appropriate agencies of new development or activities that may affect water quality. 3. Require land stewardship plans with major subdivision submittals that address such things as noxious weed control, wildlife, livestock grazing, other agricultural uses, and protection of water resources. 4. Encourage landowners adjacent to waterways to use best management practices to protect water quality. 5. Adopt standards for development along water corridors.

Issue 4.2: Access to water for new development has restrictions due to water right issues and ground water availability. Water rights for the Teton and Sun River basins are under a preliminary decree. The Teton River is subject to legislative closure for new water rights. Additionally, irrigation practices may effect water tables in the some areas.

Goal A:	New developments should have adequate water supplies while protecting the water rights of existing landowners.
Policies :	1. Monitor the water rights adjudication process. 2. Require new development to submit information on impact of proposal on irrigation districts and existing water rights. 3. Notify irrigation districts, State and Federal agencies and nearby landowners on potential impacts of development on water supplies. 4. Coordinate with agencies on strategies for addressing water rights in areas where this might be an issue. 5. Require new developments to demonstrate they have adequate water sources without negatively impacting existing uses and prohibit developments unless they satisfy this requirement.

Issue 4.3: Teton County has a diverse landscape that supports a wide range of wildlife. Much wildlife habitat is located on public lands or protected with conservation easements. These areas have significant quality of life and economic impact and policy decisions need to be coordinated with local agencies. Additionally, other quality of life factors such as air quality, scenic resources and historic resources need to be preserved.

Goal A:	Preserve high quality of life by protecting natural heritage such as wildlife, clean air, scenic vistas and cultural resources.
Policies :	1. Work with existing agencies to discourage development in areas with high natural resource value such as wildlife habitat and migration corridors, scenic areas, and archeological sites. 2. Coordinate development standards for sensitive lands such as floodplains and slopes with regulatory agencies that oversee these areas. 3. Coordinate with agencies that manage public lands on land planning issues and actively participate in planning efforts. 4. Work with other agencies to educate landowners on agricultural practices that promote conservation and wildlife values. 5. Provide information to landowners on private and non-profit efforts to protect important lands. 6. Consult with state agencies on new development to make sure they are in conformance with air quality and other standards. 7. Identify and map sensitive lands and lands with high natural resource value so information is available to decision makers. 8. Design planning processes to involve land owners in decision making process for public lands. 9. Develop gravel resources in a manner that minimizes impacts on nearby properties and on roads.

PUBLIC FACILITIES

Issue 5.1: The transportation system includes road, rail, pedestrian, air and transit facilities. The majority of county roads are gravel and designed for minimal agricultural and residential traffic. They may need upgrading if traffic levels significantly increase. The County does not have a capital improvement plan to identify and schedule future improvements.

Goal A:	Provide a safe, efficient, and economical road and transportation system.
Policies :	1. Complete an inventory and assessment of County roads that provides information on condition and needed improvements. 2. Develop a capital improvement program to schedule needed improvements. 3. Adopt design standards for construction of roads in new developments to ensure adequate future maintenance and right-of-way for service vehicles. 4. Develop policy to address maintenance and dedication issues in new developments that have private roads and clarify jurisdictional issues on existing roads. 5. Coordinate with Montana Department of Transportation on improvement to State highways and access to State roads. 6. Coordinate with Montana Department of Transportation and local communities to provide alternative modes of transportation that accommodate pedestrian, bikes and transit facilities. 7. Require adequate financial guarantees for transportation improvements in new development.

Issue 5.2: Each of the municipalities needs significant improvements to either their water and/or wastewater facilities. Some facilities lack adequate capacity for new users and funding improvements is an issue that needs to be addressed. The County can play a role in coordinating activities between agencies, facilitating actions to fund improvements, and directing growth where there is adequate facilities.

Goal A:	Water and wastewater facilities should have the capacity to meet projected future growth and should be environmentally sound.
Policies :	1. Coordinate with appropriate governing bodies on assessing and improving facilities. Provide technical or grant writing assistance. 2. Monitor the capacity and operating condition of existing facilities. 3. Encourage development where facilities have capacity for growth. 4. Encourage partnerships and innovative approaches to improve facilities.

Issue 5.3: Threats to public and private water supplies include contamination at the well head, septic field contamination, and agricultural practices. Land use and new development need to account for these potential threats.

Goal A:	Protect quality of groundwater and public water supplies.
Policies :	1. Determine well head protection zones for public water supplies in the county and include in a geographic information system. 2. Review wellhead protection requirements and expand if necessary. 3. Work with other agencies to educate landowners on non-point pollution sources and discourage practices that are a threat to groundwater supplies. 4. Work with other agencies to monitor public and private wells routinely to identify potential problems so there can be early intervention to address the problems. 5. Coordinate with state agencies that regulate discharge into water bodies and other pollution sources. 6. Require new developments to submit information regarding impact on water quality. 7. Support recommendations of source water protection plans for community water systems.

Issue 5.4: Electric utilities are investing in renewable energy. In Teton County, wind is a resource that has resulted in several new wind farms. More businesses and residents are relying on high speed Internet but service throughout much of the County does not meet current definitions of broadband.

Goal A:	Electric and telecommunication facilities should be upgraded and maintained to meet the needs of businesses and residences and promote economic development.
Policies :	1. Support programs for renewable energy development. 2. Work with telecommunication providers to expand broadband service in the county.

III. LOCAL SERVICES

Issue 6.1: The volunteer fire departments, emergency services, and Sheriff's department face personnel shortages. Due to two-worker families and time limitations fewer people are volunteering for these demanding jobs. Consequently, operating on a totally volunteer basis may be more difficult in the future. The Teton County Sheriff's Office provides all law enforcement services in the county, including the incorporated areas of Choteau, Dutton, and Fairfield. Small subdivisions in remote areas are harder to serve and may not have adequate access for emergency vehicles.

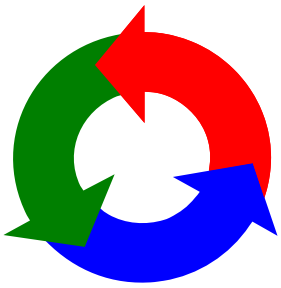
Goal A:	Provide professional and timely emergency service to all County residents.
Policies :	1. Monitor staffing needs and demand and conduct a cost/benefit study of paid staff for emergency services if critical need is determined. 2. Coordinate with agencies that provide fire fighting on public lands. 3. New development should have adequate water supply for fire fighting and incorporate fire protection measures in their design. 4. Discourage development where services can not be provided in a timely manner. 5. Design roads to ensure adequate emergency vehicle access. 6. Require rural addressing information as part of subdivision submittal. 7. Support recommendations in the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan and the Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Issue 6.2: Public school enrollment is projected to decline overall in the county. The age distribution varies throughout the county with some school districts experiencing a declining student population while the Fairfield area has a stable enrollment. Large landowners have a heavier tax burden to support schools.

Goal A:	Work with schools to help provide quality education in Teton County.
Policies :	1. Work with school district to identify issues regarding future enrollments and capital construction. 2. Notify Schools of pending new developments. 3. Discourage incompatible land uses from locating in vicinity of schools. 4. Encourage opportunities for community partnerships with schools to address educational issues. 5. Explore technology solutions with schools to provide additional educational opportunities for students and the community. 6. Consider joint projects with schools to meet common goals for open space, recreation, and community meeting space.

Issue 6.3: The County has higher rates of deaths from cancer and heart disease compared to the rest of the state. Public health officials are emphasizing lifestyle changes to prevent such illnesses. Although Benefis Hospital operates Teton Medical Center, residents must drive to Great Falls for specialty care. There is a shortage of dental health and primary health care professionals in the county

Goal A:	Promote healthy lifestyles and adequate access to health care for all residents.
Policies :	1. Encourage active lifestyles by creating opportunities for safe and attractive walking trails and recreational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. 2. Encourage programs that increase access to local foods such as farmers markets and farm-to-table initiative. 3. Design facilities and support local services that accommodate people with disabilities. 4. Work with health care providers to identify innovative programs to increase access to health care.



IMPLEMENTATION

OVERVIEW

"In short, planning is only as good as the commitment and abilities of the people responsible for carrying out the town plan." (The Small Town Planning Handbook, Daniels, Keller, Lapping)

The implementation strategies provide a blueprint for translating the goals and objectives into measurable achievements. The goals and objectives provide a framework for decision making and indicate the level of involvement that the local government feels necessary to address an issue. The implementation program outlines specific action steps that are derived from the goals and policies. A successful implementation strategy helps the community establish priorities and identifies the resources to accomplish these action steps. This section includes the following requirements from the Montana Code Annotated regarding growth policy plans.

76-1-601 (2)

A growth policy must include***:***

(d) A description of policies, regulations and other measures to be implemented in order to achieve the goals and objectives established pursuant to subsection (2)(1);

(e) a strategy for development maintenance, and replacement of public infrastructure including drinking water systems, wastewater treatment facilities, sewer systems, solid waste facilities, fire protection facilities, roads and bridges;

(f) An implementation strategy that includes:
- (i) a timetable for implementing the growth policy
- (ii) a list of conditions that will lead to a revision of the growth policy; and
- (iii) a timetable for reviewing the growth policy at least every five years and revising the policy if necessary

(g) a statement of how the governing bodies will coordinate and cooperate with other jurisdictions that explains:

(i) if a governing body is a city or town, how the governing body will coordinate and cooperate with the county in which the city or town is located on matters related to the growth policy;

(ii) if a governing body is a county, how the governing body will coordinate and cooperate with cities and towns located within the county's boundaries on matters related to the growth policy;

TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

This section describes the various tools that are part of the implementation strategy to carry out the recommendations of the plan.

1) Land Development Regulations

Teton County currently has a Subdivision Ordinance and Development Permit Regulations that control land development in the County. The subdivision ordinance regulates the subdivision of land, platting of lots, dedication of new roads, and the provision of infrastructure improvements. The ordinance contains procedures for the preparation, review and filing of subdivision documents. The Development Permit System contains standards for commercial and industrial uses anywhere within the County. It does not regulate location of uses but does contain standards for site planning, parking, roads, and environmentally sensitive areas. There is a permitting process required for these uses. Both documents are over 20 years old and need to be updated to reflect the policies in the growth policy plan and to comply with State legislative mandates as well as current judicial rulings.

In addition to the existing regulatory mechanisms in place, the Montana Code provides for petition by landowners to create a planning and zoning district with accompanying development regulations. (MCA 76-2 (Part 1).) Although there are no areas in Teton County where landowners have taken such actions, it would streamline the future petitions if administrative procedures and forms were in place in the event of citizens wanting to pursue this type of zoning.

2) Administrative Procedures

Many of the Plan's goals can be advanced through modifying and improving administrative procedures. This may include developing and updating mailing lists, updating forms, creating checklists and other user aids, reviewing notification procedures, distribution of plans, and examining timelines for reviews. The overall aim of these techniques is to promote more efficient use of staff resources, ensure comprehensive reviews and provide responsive service to the community.

4) Planning Studies & Data Gathering

There are areas and issues that require more detailed studies and special strategies. These areas can be designated as special area studies or neighborhood planning areas that will be subject of a separate planning process with targeted strategies specific to that area. In addition to these study areas, there may be information that would be useful to decision-makers but was unavailable at the time of the planning process. Specific data gathering efforts such as instituting a Geographic Information System (GIS) or land inventories are examples such planning initiatives.

5) State & Federal Programs/Technical Assistance

There are a variety of State and Federal programs available to help localities achieve the goals of the plan. The more commonly used programs include the Community Development Block Grant program, Treasure State Endowment Program, Community Technical Assistance Program, State Historic Preservation Office, and others. State agencies such as the Department of Environmental Quality, and Department of Natural Resource Conversation administer permitting procedures that may influence land development. The Montana Department of Transportation is responsible for much of the

transportation infrastructure in the County. The USDA Farm Service Agencies, Rural Development Programs and Montana State Cooperative Extension are active in the County. Additionally, a number of professional organizations provide technical assistance and other resources. These include Montana Association of Counties (MACO), Montana Association of Planners (MAP) and non-profits.

6) Education Programs & Public Outreach

Many planning objectives can be accomplished through voluntary efforts from citizens in the community. Communicating the plan's vision to the public is critical. Education and outreach efforts include disseminating information through publications, brochures, news releases, service announcements, displays and other public relations methods. It also means obtaining regular feedback through task forces, surveys, public meetings, and customer service questionnaires.

7) Conservation Easements

The property owner grants an easement to a nonprofit group (land trust, conservation group …) or public agency (Fish, Wildlife and Parks, …) to guarantee its preservation. Conservation easements can be used to preserve open space, wildlife habitat, and environmentally sensitive areas. The property owner retains use of the land and receives tax benefits.

8) Fiscal Impact Analysis

This is an analysis of a development proposal to determine the cost-benefit to the public. It considers costs such as roads, public safety, school, and other services as well as potential tax revenues.

9) Design Guidelines

Design guidelines describe and illustrate site plan and design techniques that promote good design and environmentally sound practices. Guidelines are mostly an educational tool and compliance with the guidelines is voluntary. Some guidelines may eventually be adopted as part of a regulatory system.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

A. Capital Improvement Plan

The county has an action item to complete a Capital Improvements Plan in accordance with the following guidelines.

> "A Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) is a budgeting and financial tool used by a local governing body to establish public works rehabilitation and maintenance priorities and to establish funding for repairs and improvements. The CIP includes planning, setting priorities, effective public works management, financial management, and community decision process. A CIP consists of five basic elements:
>
> 1) inventory and evaluation of existing conditions for each facility (needs assessment);
> 2) prioritization of improvement needs for each public facility and prioritization of the needs for the entire infrastructure;
> 3) identification of monetary options that can be used to meet the needs;
> 4) establishment of a time schedule that matches available funds to the improvements required to meet the system needs; and
> 5) a brief written document (the CIP which is formally adopted by the governing body by resolution or by ordinance."
>
> (*Source: Montana Department of Commerce, The Mini Capital Improvements Plan for Small Towns")*

B. Road Funding

The primary source of funding for County road improvements is the County's general fund. The Federal Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program allows some funds to be used for local roads while the State Construction Fund, from state gas tax dollars, are for projects not eligible for Federal aid.

The County Road and Bridge department is responsible for maintaining public roads and bridges in the unincorporated area that are not part of the state highway system. Private roads in residential developments that have not been improved to County standards and have not been dedicated as public right-of-way are the responsibility of the private landowner.

C. Facility Plans

Municipalities in the County have completed or initiated the facility plans to identify existing needs and project future improvements to accommodate future growth. The plans that have been completed are summarized elsewhere in this Growth Policy. The County supports these planning efforts.

D. Funding Resources

Following is a summary of financing mechanisms that may be used to fund infrastructure improvements.

> Public Works Program - Economic Development Administration - The Economic Development Administration (EDA) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce. The purpose of the Public Works Program is to assist communities with the

funding of public works and development facilities that contribute to the creation or retention of private sector jobs and to the alleviation of unemployment and underemployment. Such assistance is designed to help communities achieve lasting improvement by stabilizing and diversifying local economies, and improving local living conditions and the economic environment of the area. Grants are awarded up to a participation level of 80 percent but the average EDA grant covers approximately 50 percent of project costs. Acceptable sources of match include cash, local general obligation or revenue bonds, Community Development Block Grants, TSEP grants and loans, entitlement funds, Rural Development loans and other public and private financing, including donations.

- Transportation Alternative Program—The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) was authorized under the Moving Ahead Prof Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP_21). The TAP provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives including on– and of-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities and environmental mitigation; recreational trail program projects; safe routes to school projects; and projects for planning, designing, or constructing boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate Systems routes or other divided highways.

- State Fuel Tax—Under 15-70-101, MCA, Montana assesses a tax of $.27 per gallon on gasoline and diesel fuel used for transportation purposes. Each incorporated city and town receives a portion of the total funds allocated to cities and towns based on:

  1) The ratio of the population within each city and town to the total population in all cities and towns in the State;
  2) The ratio of the street mileage within each city and town to the total street mileage in all incorporated cities and towns in the State. The street mileage is exclusive of the Interstate, National Highway and Primary .Systems.

  All fuel tax funds allocated to the city governments must be used for the construction, reconstruction, maintenance, and repair of rural roads or city streets and alleys. Priorities for the use of these funds are established by the cities receiving them.

Debt Financing—Cities can make use of various kinds of debt financing to fund urban renewal projects.

- These include general obligation bonds, special improvement district bonds and revenue bonds as well as Tax Increment Financing Bonds. Debt financing enables local governments to finance major infrastructure projects using future revenue from special assessments, user fees, and other forms of revenue. Under –7-4101, MCA, a city or town council has power to incur indebtedness by borrowing money, issuing bonds, issuing notes, entering into leases, entering into lease-purchase agreements, or entering into installment purchase contracts for the following purposes:

  1) acquiring land for and designing and erecting public buildings:
  2) acquiring land for and designing and constructing sewers, sewage treatment and disposal plants, waterworks, reservoirs, reservoir sites, and lighting plants;

  3) Supplying the city or town with water by contract and construction or purchase of canals or ditches and water rights for supplying in the city or town with water;

  4) designing and constructing bridges, docks, wharves, breakwaters, piers, jetties, and moles;

5) Acquiring, opening or widening any street and improving the street by constructing, reconstructing and repairing pavement, gutters, curbs, and vehicle parking strips and to pay all or any portion of the cost relating to the project.

6) Purchasing or leasing fire apparatus, street and other equipment, and personal property, including without limitation, vehicles, telephone systems, and photocopy and office equipment, including computer hardware and software;

7) Building purchasing, designing constructing and maintaining devices intended to protect the safety of the public from open ditches carrying irrigation or other water;

8) Funding outstanding warrants and maturing bonds; and

9) Repaying tax protest lost by the city, town or other municipal corporation. The local government includes various administrative costs in conjunction with issuing bonds. These costs include the retention of legal counsel and financial consultants, the establishment of reserve funds and the preparation of the prospectus and various required documents. These bonds provide tax-free interest earnings to purchaser and are therefore subject to detailed scrutiny under both state and federal law.

- Special Improvement Districts—Under 7-12-4101, MCA, cities and towns can create special improvement districts for a number of activities including;
  1. The acquisition, construction or reconstruction of public streets and roads
  2. The acquisition, construction or reconstruction of sidewalks, culverts, bridges, gutters, curbs, steps and parks including the planning of trees
  3. The construction or reconstruction of sewers, ditches, drains, conduits, and channels for sanitary or drainage purposes, with outlets, cesspools, manholes, catchbasins, flush tanks, septic tanks, connecting sewers, ditches, drains, conduits, channels, and other appurtenances
  4. The construction of sewer and water systems including fire hydrants
  5. The acquisition and improvement of land to be designated as public park or open-space land
  6. The conversion of overhead utilities to underground locations in accordance with 69-4-311 thru 69-4-314
  7. The purchase, installation, maintenance and management of alternative energy production facilities

- General Obligation Bonds—General obligation bonds are backed by the full faith and credit of the city and must be approved by the voters in an election. General obligation bonds are generally payable from ad valorem taxes (based on the value of property) and expressed in mills. General obligation bonds are attractive to bond buyers because they have voter approval and are not as vulnerable to fluctuations in revenue. Cities are assigned a bond debt limit based on a percentage of taxable valuation. General obligation bonds must fall within this limit.

- Revenue Bonds—Under 7-7-4401, MCA a city or town may issue revenue bonds to finance any project or activity authorized. Revenue Bonds are paid back with revenue sources such as TIF funds, fees, rentals or sell of property.

- Treasure State Endowment Program—The Montana Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP) is a state funded program authorized 90-6-701 through 710 MCA and is administered by the Montana Department of Commerce (MDOC). It is designed to assist local governments in financing capital improvements to sewer and water facilities. Funds are derived from the Montana coal severance tax and made available to local governments as matching grants, loans and grant/loan combinations. TSEP also provides matching grants to local governments for preliminary engineering study costs.

TSEP funds may not be used for annual operation and maintenance; the purchase of nonpermanent furnishing; or for refinancing existing debt, except when required in conjunction with the financing of a new TSEP project.

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) - This program provides annual grants on a formula basis to entitled cities and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low– and moderate-income persons. The program is authorized under Title 1 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1975. The funds are administered by the Montana Department of Commerce. Non-entitlement communities, under 50,000 in population, must apply for grants on a competitive basis. CDBG funds may be used for activities which include, but are not limited to:

  1. Acquisition of real property;
  2. Relocation and demolition;
  3. Rehabilitation of residential and non-residential structures;
  4. Construction of public facilities and improvements, such as water and sewer;
  5. Facilities, streets, neighborhood centers, and the conversion of school buildings for eligible purposes;
  6. Public services, within certain limits;
  7. Activities relating to energy conservation and renewable energy resources; and
  8. Provision of assistance to profit-motivated businesses to carry out economic development and job creation/ retention activities.

- Tax Increment Financing – The legislature enacted the Tax Increment Financing District (TIF) statutes in 1974. The purpose of a TIF is to fund infrastructure and other improvements in urban renewal areas and industrial districts. The costs of these improvements can be paid directly with TIF revenues or, in many cases, TIF revenues can be pledged to the payment of bonds issued to pay the costs of the improvements. When a TIF is created, a base taxable value for the district is established. The base taxable value is the taxable value of all property within the TIF district boundary at the time the TIF is established. In following years, the amount of taxable value within the boundary of the TIF should increase. The incremental taxable value for a TIF is the amount by which the taxable value exceeds the base taxable value. The amount of property tax realized by applying the mill levies of taxing jurisdictions present in the TIF against the incremental taxable value is called the tax increment and is distributed to the TIF. The tax increment is available to the TIF to be used for the specific urban renewal or industrial district purposes set forth in §§ 7-15-4282 through 7-15-4292, MCA.

ACTION PLAN

The steps in the action plan are all related to advancing specific goals and objectives. The goals and objectives also establish the type of involvement the County will undertake. Following are criteria for evaluating the action steps.

- Does it relates to a specific need or issue identified in the County profile?
- Does it reflect priorities based on responses to community survey, feedback from public meetings and existing community plans?
- Are there resources available to undertake the effort?
- Does the strategy build on existing assets, take advantage of funding opportunities, or leverage outside resources?
- Does the strategy bring regulations and programs into compliance with State and federal requirements?

The action plan is a matrix that lists the task and identifies staffing, costs considerations, and timeframe parameters for each task. Following is a description of those parameters.

1. Staffing

In-house - Will be completed with existing staff.
Contract - Contract with outside firm to complete work.
Partner - Partner with other state/federal agency, non-profit, or other organization to complete work

2. Cost

High - Requires allocation of new funds that are not existing in budget.
Medium - Can be accomplished with existing budgeted funds.
Low - Zero or minimal costs.

3. Time Frame/Priority

Near Term - Immediate need. To be addressed within one year.
Mid Term - Defined need. May phase in implementation within 1 to 2 years.
Long Term - Requires program development that necessitates a longer timeframe 3+ years
Ongoing - Ongoing activity.
As Needed - Monitor and take action when need arises

1. Update Teton County Development Regulations & Procedures

Action	Staffing	Cost	Priority
1. Rewrite Subdivision regulations.	Contract	Medium to High	Near-Term
2. Rewrite Development Permit Regulations.	Contract	Medium to High	Mid-Term
3. Develop process and forms for citizen initiated zoning petitions.	Contract	Low to Medium	Long-Term
4. Explore options for development regulations to implement Growth Policy recommendations.	Contract	Medium	Long-Term

2. Build Information for Planning

Action	Staffing	Cost	Priority
1. Compile planning library for use of staff & public including informational brochures and reference documents from State and Federal agencies that regulate or influence land use in the County.	In-House	Low	On-going
2. Add layers of information to GIS base map to include environmentally sensitive areas, historic resources, brownfield sites, scenic viewsheds, wellhead protection zones, zoning overlay districts, natural resources…	Contract	Medium	On-going, As needed

3. Promote the development, maintenance, and replacement of public infrastructure to meet the needs of the citizens of Teton County

Action	Staffing	Cost	Priority
1. Complete an inventory and assessment of county roads.	Contract & In-house	Medium	Mid-Term
2. Adopt a Capital Improvement Program (CIP).	Contract	Medium to High	Mid-Term
3. Adopt policy on jurisdiction and maintenance for public and private roads.	Coordinate with Subdivision Rewrite		
5. Monitor North Central Montana Regional Water System process and pass resolution of support when considered for additional legislation.	In-house	Low	As-Needed

6. Include information on GIS database indicating if city water and service is available to property and wellhead protection zones.	GIS Contract	Incorporate as part of existing contract	On-Going
7. Establish task force of cities' public works officials to consider joint application processes, shared technical assistance, and information sharing on common water and sewer difficulties.	Partner	Low	Near-Term
10. Work with local jurisdictions to host a grant writing workshop with representatives from State and Federal agencies.	Partner	Low	As Needed
11. Coordinate with Montana Department of Transportation and other entities on trail projects and safety improvements.	Partner	Low	As Needed

4. Work with County, State and Federal agencies to strengthen or create initiatives and programs to meet the housing and economic development needs of the area.

Action	**Staffing**	**Cost**	**Priority**
1. Work with schools on youth leadership programs such as a youth commission or government day …	Partner	Low	On-going
2. Create a coordinating council for organizations involved in economic development.	Partner	Low	On-going
3. Work with watershed planning groups to develop design guidelines and best management practices.	Partner	Low	Mid-Term
4. Conduct housing needs assessment to determine if county can apply for Community Development Block Grant Home Funds to provide housing rehab assistance to unincorporated housing developments in the county.	Partner – Coordinate with Opportunity LInk	Low	Near-Term
5. Coordinate with state and local agencies on tourism promotion and improvement of visitor services.	Partner	Low	As needed

5. Incorporate Public Outreach & Education Methods into the Planning Process

Action	Staffing	Cost	Priority.
1. Revise development review process to notify interested parties such as watershed groups and irrigation districts.	Coordinate with Subdivision Rewrite		
2. Create checklist and develop guides to clearly explain the various development processes to citizens.	In-House	Low	Long-Term
3. Work with Internet Provider to put Growth Policy Plan and other documents on county web site.	Partner	Medium	On-going
4. Work with University of Montana to conduct additional surveys on planning issues.	Partner	Medium	As Needed

6. Special Planning Initiatives

Action	Staffing	Cost	Priority
1. Establish cooperating agency status with Federal agencies in order to participate and represent local concerns in the planning process for public lands.	In-house	Low	Near Term
2. Create special study area for the Rocky Mountain Front and develop planning strategies specific to the area.	Contract-In-House	Medium - High	Long Term
3. Work with solid waste companies to host a household hazardous waste collection day and distribute materials on non-point pollution sources.	Partner	Low	Mid-Term
4. Coordinate with Sweetgrass Development on brownfield initiatives	Partner	Low	As Needed
5. Coordinate with economic development agencies and broadband providers to plan for upgrades to broadband infrastructure.	Partner	Low	As needed

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

No single government agency can address all of the issues in the Growth Policy Plan. Many agencies offer various types of public services and still more are involved in land use, environmental, and transportation issues. Their activities all need to be coordinated to promote efficient operations, avoid duplication and minimize the potential for conflicts. There are already many examples of coordination and cooperation between agencies. These include sharing information, regular meetings between public officials of agencies, and inviting comment on development proposals.

In addition to coordination of activities, some issues require a joint response from multiple agencies. Agencies may partner on capital construction projects, share staff, conduct joint planning processes or enter intergovernmental agreements on a variety of issues. In some instances, there are regional agencies with representatives from various jurisdictions to provide specific services.

The Montana Code specifies:

> " if a governing body is a county, how the governing body will coordinate and cooperate with cities and towns located within the county's boundaries on matters related to the growth policy;"

There are three incorporated towns in Teton County (Choteau, Fairfield, Dutton). The following policies will direct coordination between the County and these towns.

- The County will provide each town with a copy of the Growth Policy and will meet with local officials upon request to discuss the plan
- The County Planning Board will continue to hear subdivision cases for the towns.
- The County will notify towns of pending development proposals within 4 miles of the town limits
- The City and County will share meeting agendas and minutes
- The County will encourage towns to adopt individual growth policies for the town and will work with them during the planning process to coordinate policies and implementation strategies
- The County will encourage the towns to incorporate existing facility plans into a capital improvement plan and will support applications for infrastructure grants
- The County and City will share databases and other information in the planning process

In addition to coordination with the towns, the following table lists other agencies that have operations in Teton County and activities that will promote intergovernmental coordination.

Table 1: Intergovernmental Coordination

Lewis & Clark National Forest	The update of Forest Plan is to be scheduled in next few years. Teton County will establish "Cooperating Agency Status" to have more local input on decisions.
State Agencies	Information sharing, public participation, coordinated review processes with the following agencies: Department of Environmental Quality reviews water & sewer systems. Permitting & compliance. Hazardous waste & solid waste regulations. Water & Air Quality. Fish, Wildlife and Parks manages wildlife preserves in Teton County. Montana Department of Transportation maintains State Highways in the County Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. Deals with water rights and groundwater issues
School Districts	Coordinate on new subdivisions. Shared use of facilities. Cooperate on Youth leadership programs
Economic Development Agencies & non-profits	The county will coordinate with agencies such as Sweetgrass Development, OpportunityLInk, Chambers of Commerce, Teton Economic Development Corporation to provide regular updates, information sharing and partner on economic development efforts.
Watershed Groups	Teton & Sun River Watershed Groups. Representative at meetings, information sharing, distribute educational materials to land owners, notify of pending development reviews, invite input on land development regs
Irrigation Districts	Greenfield, Bynum, Eldorado, Eureka/Teton Co-Operative, Farmers Co-Operative, Brady. Information sharing, notify of pending development reviews, invite input on land development regs
Utilities	Northwestern Energy, Sun River Electric Coop, Three Rivers Telephone, Water Districts, Solid Waste providers. Information sharing, notify of pending development reviews, invite input on land development regs.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Wetlands, Hazardous Wastes. Information sharing. Distribution of educational materials.
Fire Districts	Coordination through the County Department of Emergency Services and a Fire Council. Notify of pending developments. Invite input on land development regs
Regional agencies. (Rural Development Office, Area Council of Aging …)	Share planning information. Invite comments during drafting stages of the plan and for development review

REVIEW & UPDATES

Planning is a continuous process. All types of plans must be reviewed and revised on a regular basis to reflect current conditions. Changes in development practices, legislation, grant programs, budgets and numerous other factors may alter priorities or make certain policies outdated. It is important that regular reviews of the Growth Policy Plan be part of the planning program.

1. Schedule for Review

- Annual Report

The County planning staff will make a one-year status report to the Plan Commission. This report will indicate the completion of ongoing work of the items in the action plan and will identify any issues that may require revisions to the Growth Policy Plan. The annual status report will be scheduled as an item on the Planning Board agenda and the public will be invited to comment on the report.

- Five Year Review

The Montana Code requires that the Growth Policy Plan be reviewed every five years. Upon the fifth anniversary of adopting the plan, the Planning Board and staff will undertake a major review process to evaluate plan. The plan will be modified according to public procedures specified in the Montana code. Evaluation criteria include:

- Are the community's goals current and valid?
- Have circumstances, information assumptions, needs or legal framework changed?
- Does additional public input suggest the need for changes?
- Are the community planning process and planning products providing effective direction to local officials and staff?
- Is there new data that should be incorporated into the plan?
- Does the action plan reflect the completion of work items?
- Should new action items be identified and the timeline modified?
- What issues have emerged that the Plan should address?

2. Checklist of Conditions that Require Plan Revisions

There may be times prior to the five-year review that the County would want to revisit certain aspects of the plan and amend specific elements. Conditions under which this may occur include:

- Address issues that come up during implementation phase that may not have been anticipated during the drafting of the plan.
- Reflect new development proposal or building techniques that are not provided for in the plan.
- Modify to comply with changes is state legislation, judicial decisions or state programs.
- Reassess priorities to take advantage of new opportunities such as grants, partnerships, and State and Federal program.

3. Public Participation

Citizen input is the basis for the policies in the plan. Involving citizens helps develops a consensus between various interest groups. Citizens learn more about how government and planning work; how much programs cost; and the difficulty or ease of program implementation. Public outreach provides accurate information on planning issues and gives citizens the opportunity to participate in planning. Citizens will develop ownership of plan and are more likely to support planning efforts. Most importantly, public participation promotes the public interest by involving a cross section of interest groups that will demand fairness and balance in planning policies. General principles for public participation include:

- Must occur at all stages of the planning process
- Must include a variety of techniques to reach a broad audience
- Although not everyone will choose to participate, everyone must have the opportunity to participate if they so desire.
- Must meet legal due process requirements such as notification of meetings, open meetings and appropriate documentation of meetings.

The following techniques were part of the growth policy planning process and will continued to be used in future processes.

Table 2: Public Participation Techniques

Technique	Description
Citizen Advisory Committees	In 2003, Teton County established a steering committee to develop the plan. The Committee had representation from different interest in the County. The Planning Board oversaw the 2015 update.
Opinion Surveys	In 2003, as part of the planning process, Teton County partnered with the University of Montana to conduct an extensive survey to assess resident's priorities and attitudes towards various land use issues. The County conducted an on-line survey as part of the 2015 update.
Town Meetings	Upon request, the County will conduct town meetings in each of the three incorporated towns to present the draft plan and obtain public input.
Workshops	Future planning processes may involve workshops to explore specific issues.
Web Publishing	The county will post an electronic version of the plan on the County web site.
Press Coverage	Press releases on the Growth Policy were sent to the weekly newspaper.
Comment Period on draft documents	Review copies were available at the public libraries and at the County courthouse. Parties could submit written comments or attend public meetings.
Public Displays & Exhibits	Future planning processes may include the creation of displays and exhibits that will contain information on the plan.
Present to Civic Groups & Clubs	Upon request, Staff or Planning Board members will present an overview of the Growth Policy Plan to citizen groups.

SUBDIVISION REVIEW

Subdivision is the division of land that creates one or more parcels for the purpose of selling, renting, leasing or conveying the land. In Montana, subdivisions that create parcels containing less than 160 acres (excluding right-of-ways) are subject to the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act (MSPA - MCA 76-3) In addition to the State Code, subdivisions are subject to local regulations. Under the MSPA, land division may fall into one of three categories that do not require local government subdivision review.

1) Divisions Exempt from local Approval but requiring a Survey - Land divisions that are exempt from local government review and approval as subdivisions, but which must be surveyed and a certificate a survey filed (without local subdivision approval) before title can be transferred.

- Any parcel 160 acres or larger in size that cannot be described as consisting of 1/32 or larger aliquot parts of a section.
- Parcels less than 160 acres but are exempt under provisions for a family transfer, agricultural purpose, or relocation of a common boundary line.

2) Divisions Exempt from Subdivision Review and Surveying

- Parcels 160 acres or larger and parcels exempt under family transfer, or agricultural purpose that can be described as consisting of 1/32 or larger aliquot parts of a section.
- Divisions of land created by a court order, eminent domain, agricultural leases, oil, gas, or water interest, and other miscellaneous exemptions.

3) Amended Plats

Within a platted subdivision the relocation of common boundaries and the aggregation of five or fewer aggregated lots may be accomplished without approval of the governing body but must be surveyed.

Among the requirements in Section 76-1-601 of the Montana Code regarding requirements for growth policies is the following.

> (h) a statement explaining how the governing bodies will:
> (i) define the criteria in 76-3-608(3)(a); and
> (ii) evaluate and make decisions regarding proposed subdivisions with respect to the criteria in 76-3-608(3)(a); and
>
> (i) a statement explaining how public hearings regarding proposed subdivisions will be conducted.

The flow chart indicates the public hearing process for reviewing subdivision. The criteria in 76-3-608 (3)(a) will be evaluated in the staff report to the Planning Board and considered as part of the deliberations. Definition of criteria will be reviewed in detail as part of the subdivision regulation updates but will generally reflected the recommended definitions as follows:

Definitions of criteria in 76-606(3)(a)

Agriculture - Montana Code Annotated contains definitions for the words "agriculture" and "agricultural" as follows:

- 41-2-103, MCA Definitions. As used in this part, the following definitions apply:
  (1) "Agriculture" means: (a) all aspects of farming, including the cultivation and tillage of the soil; (b)(I) dairying; and (ii) the production, cultivation, growing, and harvesting of any agricultural or horticultural commodities, including commodities defined as agricultural commodities in the federal Agricultural Marketing Act (12 U>S>C> 1141j(g)): (c) the raising of livestock, bees, fur-bearing animals, or poultry; and (d) any practices, including forestry or lumbering operations, performed by a farmer or on a farm as an incident to or in conjunction with farming operations, including preparation for market or delivery to storage, to market, or to carriers for transportation market.
- 87-8-701, MCA Definitions. Unless the context requires otherwise, in this part the following definitions apply: (1) "Agricultural and food product" includes a horticultural, viticultural, dairy, livestock, poultry, bee, other farm or garden product, fish or fishery product, and other foods.

Agricultural Water User Facilities: those facilities which provide water for agricultural land as defined in 15-7-202, MCA, or which provide water for the production of agricultural products as defined in 15-1-101, MCA including, but not limited to ditches, pipes, and head gates.

Local Services: Any and all services or facilities that local government entities are authorized to provide.

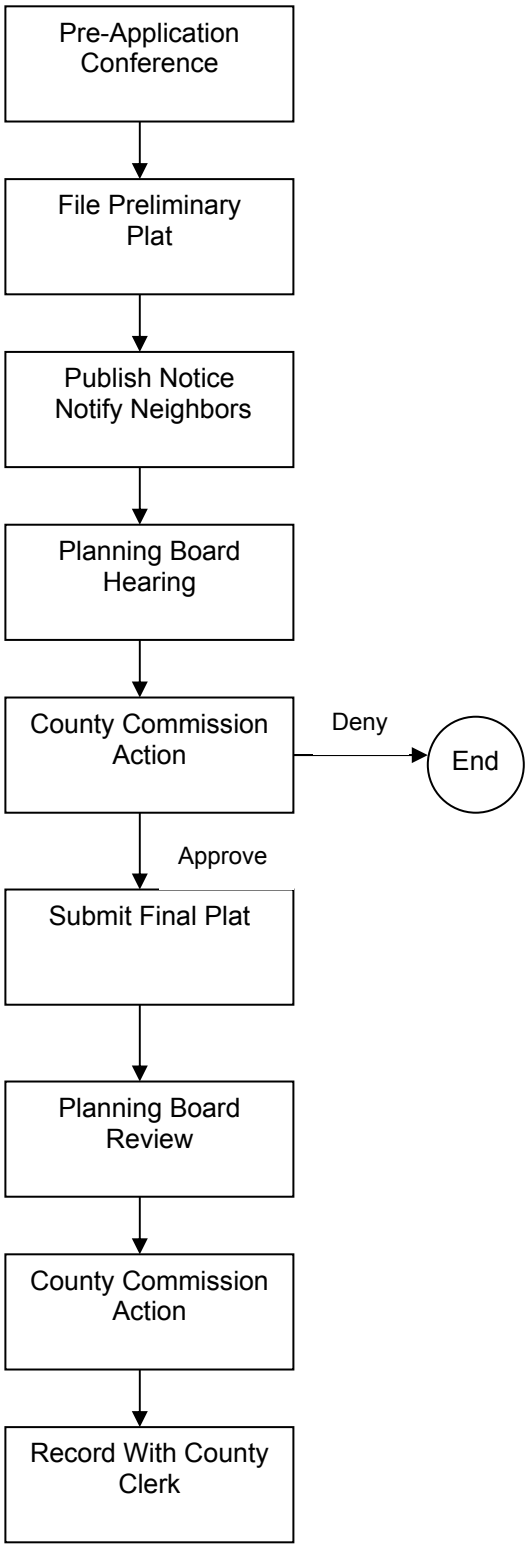
Natural Environment: The physical conditions which exist within a given area, including land, air, water, mineral, flora, fauna, noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance.

Wildlife: Living things which are neither human nor domesticated.

Wildlife Habitat: Place or type of site where wildlife naturally lives and grows.

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, not merely for the welfare of a specific individual or a small class of persons.

SUBDIVISION - Process (For major subdivisions of 6 or more lots)



This is required in the MSPA and is generally conducted by the Teton County Planning Staff.

Submit at least 2 copies of the preliminary plat . See submittal checklist.

Notice is published in the Choteau Acantha 15 days in advance of the hearing. The adjacent property owners are notified by certified mail.

Staff prepares report. Planning Board makes a recommendation to the County Commission.

The governing body shall make written findings on whether the preliminary plat meets the review criteria in the MSPA.

Must submit within 3 years unless an extension is granted. In addition to the final plat, the applicant must submit a number of other documents. (See submittal checklist.)

Must review within 30 days of submittal. Planning Board reviews the final plat for conformity to the regulations and to the tentative plat.

County Commission passes resolution to approve or denies subdivision.

Certifications are required as specified under the "Uniform Standards for Final Subdivision Plats". See checklist.

POPULATION

KEY FINDINGS

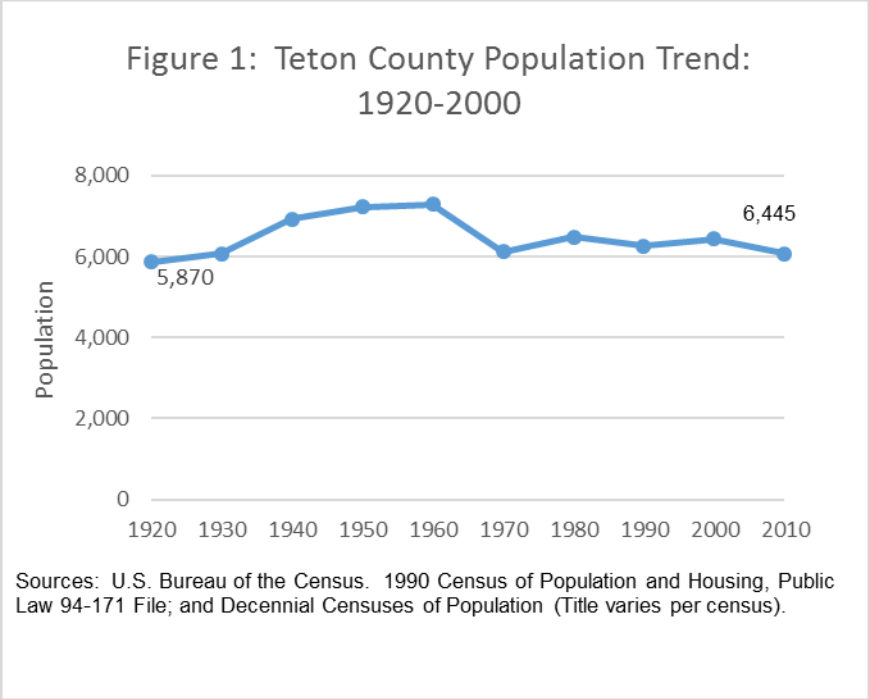
- The number of persons residing in Teton County has remained relatively steady over the past 80 years.
- The population in Teton County declined from 6,445 to 6,073 (-5.8%) from the 2000 Census to the 2010 Census. This compares to a statewide population growth of 9.6% during the same period.
- The population is projected to remain between 2000 and 2010 levels for the next 20 years.
- As indicated by population dynamics in nearby counties in the region, have been influenced by job growth. A major employer moving to the county would impact population growth.
- There has been relatively little in-migration to the county over the last five years.
- While the towns of Choteau and Dutton both lost population over the last ten years, the town of Fairfield experienced a slight population increase.
- There is little racial diversity in Teton County. In 2010, 96.3% of the population was classified as white. American Indian represented the largest minority population with 1.4% of the population.
- The population in Teton County is aging. The median age of Teton County increased from 40 in the 2000 Census to 45.8 in the 2010 Census. This compared to a median age of 39.9 in 2010 for the state of Montana.
- It is projected that the 65 and older age cohort will increase from 1,268 in 2010 to 1,788 in 2030.
- Disability rates among the population age 65 and older is 43.3% compared to 12.3% for the age 18 -64 age cohort.

1. HISTORICAL POPULATION CHANGE

Teton County's population in 2010 was 6,093. Census population numbers reflect the number of persons who listed Teton County as their place of residence. It does not include persons who may live in Teton County part-time or seasonally but who, for census purposes, officially list their residence somewhere else.

There has been relatively little fluctuation in Teton County population over the past 80 years, as measured by the decennial census data shown in Figure 1. The 2000 population exceeds the 1920 population by 203 persons, or less than 5 percent. Population rose from 5,870 in 1920 to a high of 7,295 in 1960. During the 1960s the population slipped to 6,116. Since 1970 the population has fluctuated. According to the 2010 Census, the population declined by 372 people or -5.8% since the year 2000.

Figure 1: Historic Population Trends



2. POPULATION PROJECTIONS

County level population projections provided by the Montana Census & Economic Information Center (CEIC) are a product of Regional Economic Models, Inc. According to the CEIC, the projected population for Teton County is expected to remain between 2000 and 2010 census levels. Projections may change if a major employer located in the County.

Table 1: Population Projections for Teton County

2000	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
6,445	6,073	6,258	6,313	6,350	6,361	6,273

Source: http://ceic.mt.gov/Population/PopProjections_StateTotalsPage.aspx

3. DYNAMICS OF POPULATION CHANGE

Examining population trends in nearby counties provides other insights on the dynamics of population growth in the region. In the region, Pondera and Chouteau counties also experienced population growth during the last eight years. These counties are similar in population size and have a primarily agricultural economy. Liberty County experienced the highest rate of population growth between 2000 and 2010. The county had two major construction projects for large grain elevators which contributed to this growth. Cascade County also experienced population growth as its economy continued to diversity and grow. Glacier County experienced population growth primarily due to growth on the Blackfeet Reservation.

Table 2: Census Population Change– Representative Counties

County	2000	2010	% Change	2014	Trend Since 2010
Cascade	80,357	81327	1.21	82344	Increase
Chouteau	5970	5813	-2.63	5894	Increase
Glacier	13,247	13,399	1.15	13696	Increase
Liberty	2158	2339	8.39	2359	Stable
Pondera	6424	6153	-4.22	6219	Increase
Teton	6445	6037	-5.77	6064	Stable
Toole	5267	5324	1.08	5150	Decline
State of Montana	902,195	989,415	9.7%	1,023,579	Increase

Source: United States Census Bureau - Census of the Population

Changes in population can occur in only three ways: (1) by birth, (2) by death, and (3) by movement in or out of the area of study. The factors that influence birth or deaths have become more predictable as we achieve better living conditions and health care. As population changes occur in Teton County and Choteau, the nature of the population, both in size and structure will be altered according to migration patterns. Table 1-2 shows the population change for Teton County from 2000 to 2010. Lower birth rates and an older population resulted in a net loss due to natural factors. There was a net out-migration of 298 persons according to Public Health and Human Services data. This is a reversal of the trend from 1990 to 2000 which had a net in-migration of 143 persons.

Table 3: Births, Deaths and Net Migration in Teton County

2000 Census	2010 Census	Births 2001-2010	Deaths 2001-2010	Natural Change	Net Migration
6,445	6,073	602	676	-74	-298

Source: Montana Dept. of Public Health and Human Services, http://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/Epidemiology/OESS-VS#223953338-annual-report

4. **LOCATION OF POPULATION**

The U.S. Census Bureau maintains population statistics for the three incorporated communities in Teton County—Choteau, Dutton, and Fairfield. The 2000 Census also developed statistics for Power. In 2000, these towns had a total of 2,708 persons. There were 3,365 persons, or 55.4% of all Teton County residents, lived outside of towns. County-wide, the population density is 2.8 persons per square mile.

Table 3: Population for Places: 2000 & 2010

Place	**2000 Census**	**2010 Census**	**Change 2000 – 2010**
Choteau	1,751	1,684	-67
Dutton	389	316	-73
Fairfield	659	708	49
Total in Towns	2,799	2,708	-91
Power*	171	179	8
Rest of County (including Power)	3,646	3,365	-281
Total	6,445	6,073	-372

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of the Population

Between 2000 and 2010, Choteau and Dutton lost population, while Fairfield gained population. The unincorporated areas of the county lost 281 persons during this same time.

5. POPULATION BY RACE

Teton County experienced little change between 2010 in terms of race and ethnicity. Persons listed as White for census purposes comprised approximately 96% of the total population in 2000 and 2010.

Table 4: Population by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010

	2010	**%**
Total	6073	100%
White	5847	96.3%
Hispanic*	76	1.3%
Black or African American	3	0%
American Indian and Alaska Native	88	1.4%
Asian and Pacific Islander	8	0.1%
Other Race	13	0.2%
Two or More Races	113	1.9%

**Note: Hispanics can be of any race and included in other categories such as "White."*
Sources: *U.S. Bureau of the Census. Census of Population and Housing,*

6. POPULATION BY AGE & DISABILITY

Table 5 shows the population by various age categories for each of the last four censuses. The median age in Teton County has increased from 33.3 in 1980 to 45.8 in 2010. The aging of the population is a national trend. Median age for Montana in 2000 was 39.9 in the 2010 Census.

Table 5: Population by Age, 2010,2000, 1990, and 1980

	Total	Ages 0-4	Ages 5-17	Ages 18-24	Ages 25-44	Ages 45-64	Ages 65-84	Ages 85+	Median
2010 Census	6,073	323	1,223	210	1,210	1,846	1,057	204	45.8
2000 Census	6,445	397	1,360	393	1,587	1,635	917	156	40.0
1990 Census	6,271	412	1,412	376	1,668	1,285	993	125	36.5
1980 Census	6,491	570	1,385	558	1,614	1,420	824	120	33.3

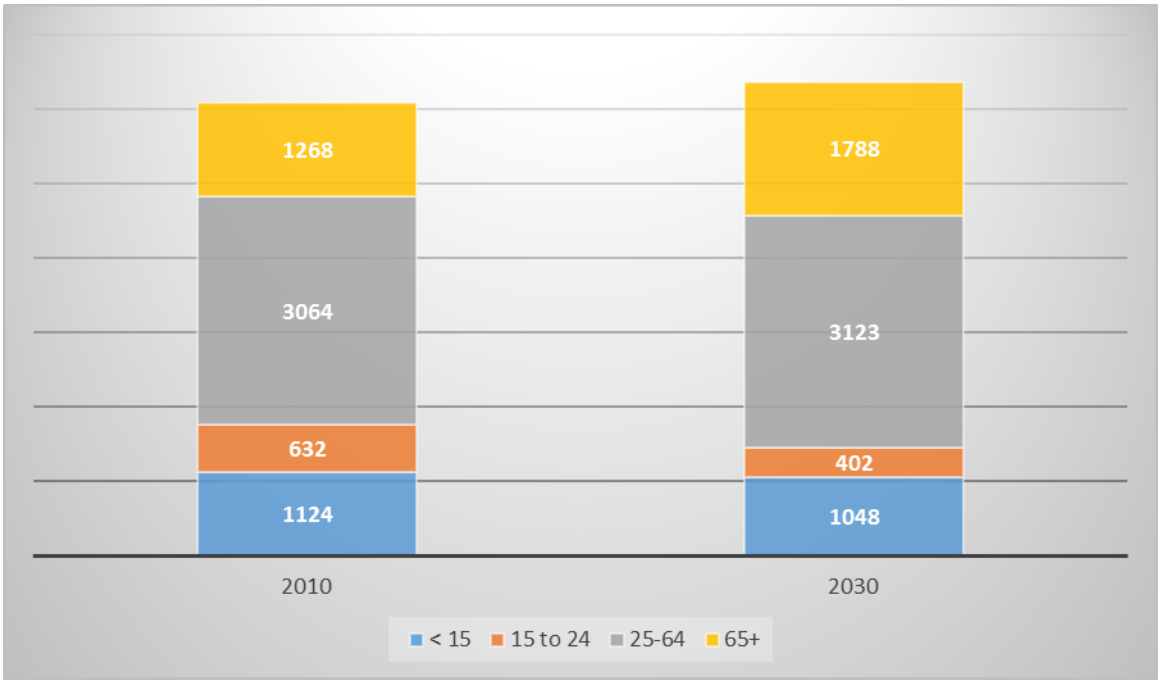
Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 Census of Population and Housing,

Older age cohorts typically have higher rates of disability. According to the U.S. Census American Community Survey from 2008 through 2013, the disability rate in Teton County for age groups from 18 to 64 was 12.3% compared to a rate of 43.3% for ages 65 and older.

7. POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The Montana Census Economic and Information Center, provides population projections by age groups. As indicated in Figure 3, based, the trend toward fewer persons under age 24 continues while the age group over age 65 increases. The total number of persons aged 5-19 will decrease from 1,536 (actual 2000 census count) to 1,330 in 2010. It is projected that by the number of people age 65 and over will increase by 520 people from 1,268 in the year 2010 to 1,788 in the year 2030. This increase in population will have implications on demand for new housing and local services to accommodate this population.

Figure 2: Age Distribution for Years 2010 and 2030 for Teton County



Source: Montana Census and Economic Information Center, Montana County Population Projections by Age Cohort, Regional Economic Model, INC (REMI) – released April 2013

ECONOMY

KEY FINDINGS

- Per Capita income in the county fluctuates depending on agricultural production. In 2013, per capita in the county was $47,165 and ranked 8th in among counties in Montana.
- Teton County residents get a higher percentage of their income from dividends, interest and rent compared to the rest of the state.
- The poverty rate in Teton County (15.1%) is comparable to the statewide average. Households with children under 18 are more likely to live in poverty.
- Teton County historically has a lower unemployment rate than the state or national averages. The annual average unemployment rate in Teton County in 2014 was 3.8% compared to 4.7% for the state.
- Teton County has a higher percentage of residents who work from home (12.0%) compared to the rest of the state (7.7%).
- The largest sectors of the economy as measured by employment, were the health care/social assistance and retail trade sectors.
- The construction industry experienced a dramatic decline in employment during the economic recession and as of 2013, had not recovered to pre-recession levels.
- Lodging tax revenues indicate an overall upward trend in collections and reflect the growing importance of the tourism economy.
- The average non-resident visitor to Teton County spends an average of $168.88 per day.
- Average market value of agricultural products per farm sold in the county in 2012 exceeded the state average.
- The percentage of farm revenue from government payments decreased from 2007 to 2012.
- The market value of crops comprise about 60% of market value of agricultural products in the county while livestock comprises about 40% of market value of agricultural products in the county.
- The average age of farmers continues to increase and was 56.9 in 2012.

1. Income (Per Capita)

In 2013 Teton County had a per capita personal income (PCPI) of $47,165. This PCPI ranked 8th in the state and was 120% of the national average ($44,765). In the north central Montana region, only Toole County had a higher PCPI.

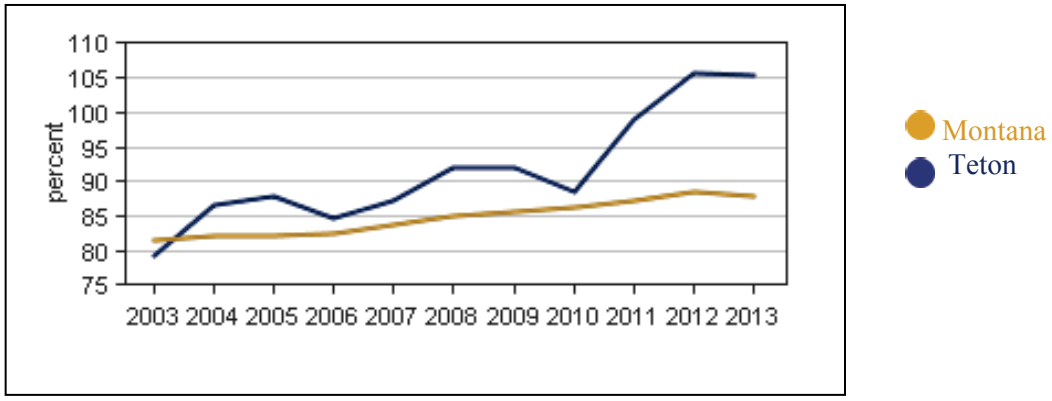
Table 1: 2010 Per Capita Income of surrounding counties to Teton County

County	Per Capita Income	Rank in State
Cascade	$40,759	16
Chouteau	$37,501	30
Glacier	$32,340	48
Liberty	$39,505	23
Pondera	$39,682	22
Teton	$47,165	8
Toole	$49,818	5

Source: U.S Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, http://www.bea.gov/regional/bearfacts/action.cfm

The per capita income in Teton County fluctuates considerably depending on agricultural production. As indicated in Figure 1, from 2003 to 2010, per capita income was below the national average. It increased dramatically between 2010 and 2011 and has remained at above average levels to the most recent year when data was available. Historically, PCPI for the county has generally exceeded statewide averages.

Figure 1: Per Capita Income as a Percent of the United States



Source: U.S Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, http://www.bea.gov/regional/bearfacts/action.cfm

2. Total Personal Income

In 2013, the total personal income of Teton County was $386,057,000. This ranked 29th in the state. Total personal income includes net earnings as well as dividends, interest, rent and personal current transfer payments received by residents of Teton County. Transfer payments include income from social security, pensions, disability, and other programs.

Compared to the rest of the state and the nation, Teton County residents receive a lower percentage of their income from personal earnings and a higher percentage of their income from dividends, interest, and rent. In 2003, 28% of income was derived from dividends, interest and rent compared to 38% derived from these sources in 2013. The amount of income derived from transfer payments remained relatively stable from 2003 (16%) to 2013 (17%). The contribution of net earnings declined from 55% in 2003 to 48% in 2013.

The distribution of total personal income is typical of a county with an older demographic that would include retirees who are receiving income from investments while young adults primarily receive income from earnings on jobs.

Table 2: Percent Contribution to Total Personal Income - 2013

	Teton	Montana	United States
Net Earnings	48%	58%	64%
Dividends, interest, rent	38%	24%	19%
Current Transfer Receipts	16%	18%	17%

Source: U.S Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, http://www.bea.gov/regional/bearfacts/action.cfm

3. Poverty & Low Income

Each year the U.S. Census Bureau establishes thresholds to measure the number of people living below a certain income level. The numbers are used to formulate economic policy and distribute social service aid. For example, the poverty threshold for 2014 was $19,055 for a household with two adults and one child. According to the 2010 Census data, 15.1% of the population of Teton County is below the poverty level which was comparable to the statewide average of 15.2% below poverty level. Families with children are more likely to be living in poverty than any other group.

Table 3: Estimated Number and Percent People of All Ages in Poverty – 2009-2013

	%
Individuals in Poverty	15.1%
Families in Poverty	7.7%
Households with children under 18 in poverty	14.5%
Householder is 65 or over in poverty	4.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

4. Labor Force

The annual average unemployment rate for Teton County in 2014 was 3.8% and was lower than the State average of 4.7%. Teton County typically has lower unemployment than the state and national averages. In 2014, the national unemployment rate 6.2% and the state unemployment rate was 4.7. Unemployment in the County during the recent recession with a high of 6.0% unemployment in 2010. The unemployment rate has steadily declined since then to its current rate of 3.8%.

Table 4: 2014 Annual Area Labor Force Statistics – Teton County

Civilian Labor Force	2,922
Employment	2,812
Unemployment	110
Unemployment Rate	3.8%
Montana Unemployment Rate	4.7%
National Unemployment Rate	6.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, http://www.bls.gov/lau/

6. Commuting

Compared to the rest of the state, more people relied on walking and worked at home. This resulted in fewer people driving cars (77%) to work. A higher percentage of people (12.0%) worked outside the county indicating that many who do drive to work, have longer distances to travel.

Table 5: Commuting Trends – 2009 - 2013

	Teton	**Montana**
Car/Truck/Van	77.7%	85.5%
Carpooled	10.3%	10.1%
Public Transportation	0.5%	0.8%
Walked	7.2%	4.9%
Bike/Motorcycle	2.5%	2.5%
Worked at Home	12.0%	6.3%
Worked in County where lived	79.7%	90.6%
Worked outside of county of residence	20.2%	7.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

6. Industry by Type

The health care/social assistance and retail trade sectors represent the largest source of employment in the county. Manufacturing and accommodations/lodging were the next largest sectors.

From 2008 to 2013 was a period that the nation and state went through an economic downtown turn followed by a recovery period. During such a period, there are typically industries that suffer losses at more dramatic rates than other industries. The construction industry was the hardest hit in the state and nationally. According to data from the U.S. Census, the industry suffered a 29.7% decline in employment during this period indicating that it has not yet recovered from the recession.

Despite the recession, some industries have experienced employment growth. Numerically, the health care sector experienced the most job growth followed by the accommodations/food service industries and the transportation and warehousing sector. While precise numbers for the manufacturing sector are not available, the data that is available shows that this sector also experienced some employment growth from 2008 to 2013.

Table 6: Employment by Major Industry – Teton County

Industry	2008	2013	# Change	% Change
Farm	B	B	--	--
Construction	91	64	-27	-29.7%
Manufacturing	A	33	Increase	--
Wholesale Trade	B	B	--	--
Retail Trade	215	200	-15	-7.0%
Transportation & Warehousing	43	61	18	41.9%
Information	C	C	--	--
Finance and Insurance	B	80	--	--
Real Estate, Rental and Leasing	49	A	--	--
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	34	32	-2	-5.8%
Health Care & Social Assistance	232	265	33	14.2%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	A	A	--	--
Accommodations & Food Services	96	121	25	26.0%
Other Services	51	58	7	13.7%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Notes:

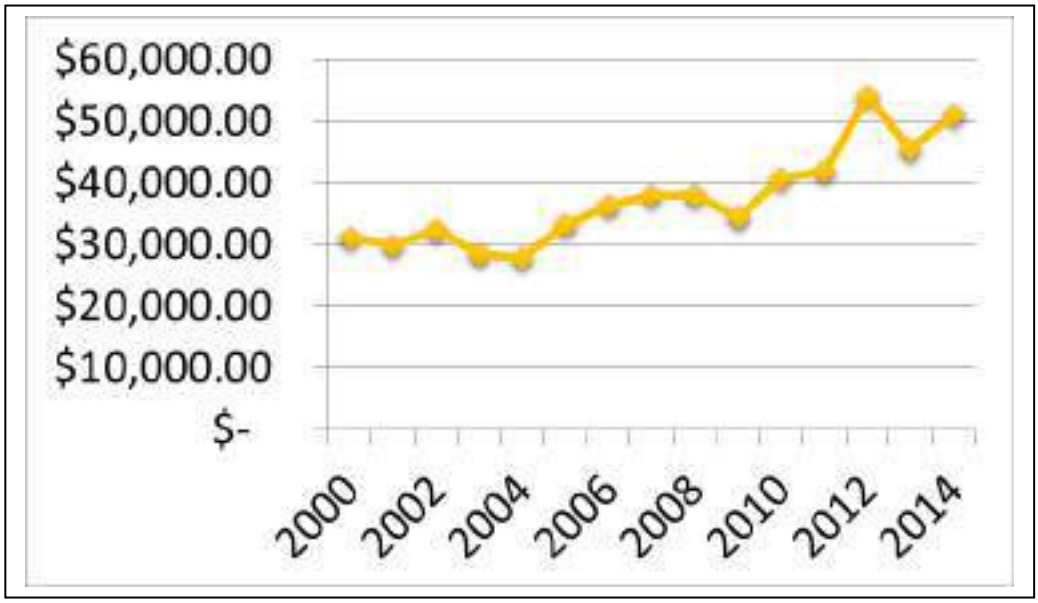
A = 0-19 employees
B = 20-99 employees
C = 100 – 249 employees

8. Tourism

A. Lodging Revenues

Lodging revenues collection are an indication of the tourism trends in the county. In 2014, $51,031 of lodging revenue was collected by the state from Teton County. As indicated in Figure 6, while there has been some fluctuation from year-to-year, the overall trend has been for an increase in lodging revenue.

Figure 6: Lodging Tax Revenue Collections –Teton County



Source: Montana Department of Commerce Montana Promotion Division, http://tourism.mt.gov/MontanasTourismIndustry/LodgingFacilityTaxRevenue

B. Tourism Stats

The University of Montana, Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research (ITTR), routinely collects data on non-resident visitors to the state. Additionally, in 2013 conducted a study on the economic impact of the Stage Stop Inn in Choteau. Following are some key findings from this data.

- 45% of customers at the Stage Stop were from Montana and 55% were from out-of-state
- Of those staying at the Stage Stop, 38% were in town for a special event, 20% were passing through, 21% were recreating nearby, 21% were in town on business, and 19% were visiting family
- Of visitors to Teton County, 56% of the groups had all or some people who were visiting the state for the first time while 44% were all repeat visitors
- The average age of non-resident visitors in Teton County was 52
- The average daily expenditure for visitors in Teton County was $168.88
- For non-resident visitors to Teton County, 65% indicated their primary purpose of the trip was for vacation and 30% said the primary purpose was to visit friends/family

Source: http://www.itrr.umt.edu/

10. Agriculture

Table 9 indicates that the number of farms declined between 2007 and 2012 from 770 to 742 farms. The amount of land in farms has also declined. The average size of farms in Teton County is slightly smaller than the average for the state of Montana.

The average market value of products in 2012 was significantly higher than 2007. The average value of products sold in Teton County was $188,811 compared to an average of $151,031 for the state. Although, the average government payment to farms decreased by 16% from 2007 to 2012 in Teton County, thee average government payment was comparable to the statewide average in 2012. Crop sales comprise about 60% of market value in the county compared to 40% for livestock sales.

The average age of farm operators had been increasing for a number of past decades and reflects the average aging of Montana citizens. The average age for Teton County is slightly lower than the State of Montana average age of 58.9. The number of farm operators whose principal occupation is farming is slightly higher than the state average.

Table 7: Agricultural Statistics

	2012	**2007**	**Change**
Number of Farms	742	770	-4%
Land in Farms (acres)	975,173	1,152,691	-15%
Avg. Size Farm in Teton County	1314	1497	-12%
Avg. Size Farm in Montana	2,134	2,079	2%
Avg Govt. Payment to Farms Receiving Payments (Teton County)	$16,223	$18,827	-16%
Market Value of All Products Sold	140,098,000	97,705,000	+43%
Average Market Value of Products sold per farm	$188,811	$126,889	+49%
% Crop Sales	59%	--	--
% Livestock Sales	41%	--	--
	Teton County	**Montana**	
Average Age of Farm Operator	56.9	58.9	
% Farming is Principal Occupation	58.8%	55.1%	

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/

HOUSING

KEY FINDINGS

- The number of total housing units declined from the 2000 Census to the 2010 Census. This may be attributed to demolitions and removal of older mobile homes.
- According to the 2010 Census, Teton County had a vacancy rate of 15.3%. Seasonal/recreational homes accounted for the largest portion (42%) of all vacant homes.
- The total number of rental units declined from 673 units in 2000 to 611 units in 2010. In 2010, only 34 housing units were available for rent representing a decrease from 49 available units in 2000 and 57 available units in 1990.
- Only 2.1% of the housing stock was available for sale or rent compared to 3.3% statewide.
- Average household size is 2.29 in the County compared to 2.35 statewide and 2.12 in Choteau.
- Building permit activity indicates that there has been some moderate activity in Choteau and Fairfield since 2010.
- The housing stock is predominantly single-family (77.3%), with mobile homes accounting for 12.8% of the housing stock and multi-family accounting for 10% of the housing stock. Most multi-family units are located in the incorporated cities.
- Teton County has a larger percentage of housing units built prior to 1960 (62.7%) compared to the rest of the state (37.6%).
- Due to the age of the housing stock, the majority of homes are rated as fair or average condition. Only 13.6% of the housing stock in the county was rated above average compared to 34.9% statewide with above average ratings.
- Single and 2-person households comprised 70.1% of the households in 2010.
- According to the 2010 Census, 14.9% of households earning less than $20,000 were experiencing a housing cost burden.
- Average cost of a home in Teton County in 2010 was $105,000 compared to $175,000 for the state.
- Fair market rent for a 2-bedroom unit in 2014 was $637 and was only slightly less than Great Falls.

NUMBER OF HOUSING UNITS AND OCCUPANCY CHARACTERISTICS

According to census data, there were 2,892 housing units in Teton County in 2010. This was a decrease of 18 units from the 2000 census. The decline may be attributed to demolitions and removal of older mobile homes. The recession in the latter half of the decade resulted in a dramatic decline in new buildings statewide. Table 1 displays occupancy characteristics for 1990, 2000and 2010. In 2010, 63.6 percent of all units in Teton County were owner occupied, 21.1 percent were renter occupied, and 15.3 percent were vacant.

Table 1: Occupancy Characteristics of Housing Units, Teton County 1990, 2000, 2010

	1990	2000	2010
TOTAL	2,725	2,910	2,892
Occupied	2,329	2,538	2,450
Owner Occupied	1,710	1,914	1,839
As % of Total of all housing stock	62.8%	65.8%	63.6%
Renter Occupied	619	624	611
As % of Total of all housing stock	22.7%	21.4%	21.1%
Vacant	396	372	442
As % of Total	14.5%	12.8%	15.3%
For Rent	57	49	34
For Sale only	33	43	27
Rented or Sold but not occupied	19	36	18
For seasonal, recreational or occasional use	126	145	187
For migrant workers	9	5	1
Other vacant	152	94	175

Sources:
U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1990 Census of Population and Housing.
U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2000 Census of Population and Housing.
U.S. Bureau of the Census. 2010 Census of Population and Housing.

Of the 442 homes in Teton County that were classified as vacant by the U.S. census, only 61 (2.1 percent of all housing units) were for rent or for sale. Total number of rental units declined from 673 in 2000 to just 645 in 2010 (611 occupied plus 34 vacant for rent). There were a large number of vacant homes that were classified as “Other vacant”. These may include units that are in disrepair and uninhabitable as well as units that are under foreclosure and not available for rent or for sale. The low number of vacant units that are available is low compared to a 3.3% for the rest of the state.

The number of seasonal units increased in the county from just 65 in 1980 to 187 units in 2010. This comprises 6.4% of the housing stock in the county.

Table 2: Occupancy Characteristics for Teton County and Montana, 2000

	Teton County	Montana
	% of Occupied Housing Units	% of Occupied Housing Units
Owner Occupied	75.1%	68.0%
Renter Occupied	24.9%	32.0%
Vacant	15.3%	15.2%
For Rent	7.7%	13.8%
For Sale only	6.1%	8.1%
Rented or Sold but not occupied	4.0%	2.9%
For seasonal, recreational or occasional use	42.3%	52.9%
For migrant workers	0.2%	0.4%
Other vacant	39.6%	22.2%
	Household Size	Household Size
All occupied units: Average Household Size	2.29	2.35

Source: Census 2010 Summary Tape File 1.

The number of housing units in unincorporated areas of the county grew by 14. Choteau and Dutton had a net loss in housing units but Fairfield had a net gain of 28 units. Table 3 displays housing information for the incorporated communities in the county for 2000 and 2010.

Table 3: Housing Characteristics, Choteau, Fairfield, and Dutton—2000 & 2010

	Choteau		Fairfield		Dutton	
	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000
Average Household Size	2.12	2.13	2.32	2.31	2.12	2.46
Total Housing units	888	897	339	311	172	177
Occupied Housing units	791	807	305	285	149	158
Owner Occupied	529	574	225	198	112	122
Renter Occupied	262	233	80	87	37	36
Vacant Housing Units	97	90	34	26	23	19
For seasonal, recreational...	23	18	4	3	3	2

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census Summary Tape File 1 for 1990 and 2000

Since the 2010 Census there has been some moderate building activity in Choteau and Fairfield.

Table 4 : Building permit activity

Year	Choteau	Fairfield
2010	2	2
2011	6*	0
2012	2	2
2013	2	2
2014	1	1
Total	13	7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, http://www.census.gov/construction/bps/
*Note: * = 6 units in 2 multifamily buildings*

TYPE OF HOUSING

According to the U.S. Census, American Community Survey, single-family dwellings represent approximately 77.3% of the total housing stock while mobile homes 12% of the market. Although mobile homes tend to be a more affordable housing option, older mobile homes may not meet current building standards and often lack energy efficient features resulting in high energy bills for occupants. Multi-family units represent about 10% of the market in the County. Multi-family units are more likely to be located in the city while the county has a higher percentage of mobile homes.

Table 5: Housing by Type

TYPE OF STRUCTURE	TETON COUNTY
Single Family	77.3%
Townhome/Duplex	2.1%
Multi-Family (3-9 Units)	5.4%
Multi-Family (10+)	2.5%
Mobile Home	12.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau – American Community Survey 2009 - 2013

HOUSING CONDITION

The most recent standardized statewide analysis of housing stock is the 2005 *Montana Housing Condition Study*. The *Montana Housing Condition Study* is based on property tax data from the Montana Department of Revenue. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the inventory of housing in Montana, reporting on physical condition, quality of construction, age, style, finish, and several other characteristics. The data represents all properties on the tax rolls in 2005. Given the minimal level of building activity over the last 10-years, the 2005 housing condition numbers are still representative of current conditions.

The *Montana Housing Condition Study* distinguishes between property taxed as residential and property taxed as commercial, or income property. Commercial property is classified into many types: single family homes, duplexes, triplexes, four unit complexes, apartments, townhouses, row-houses, condominiums, and other miscellaneous building types. Residential property includes three types—single family, mobile home, and condominium. Some of these residences may be rented out, but they show on tax rolls as residential, non-commercial properties. In Teton County for example, the tax data does not show any single family or mobile homes as rental units, but these do exist as rentals in the county. Commercial properties are not included in the housing conditions study data.

Table 6 displays number of housing units by type in 2005. The *Montana Housing Condition Study* identifies a total of 2,701 housing units while the 2010 census accounted for 2,892 units. The difference may be accounted for, in part, due to the different methodology from the two counts. The *Montana Housing Condition Study* does not include commercial properties or mobile homes that are classified as personal property. According to section 15-1-116 of the MCA mobile homes are real property if the running gear is removed, the home is attached to a permanent foundation and a form has been recorded with the county clerk stating the manufactured home is an improvement to real property.

Table 6: Teton County: Number of Housing Units by Type, 2005

	#
Single-Family	379
Mobile Home	2,322
Total	**2,701**

Source: Montana Housing Condition Study,
http://housingcdd.mt.gov/CP/housingconditionstudy.mcpx

Table 7 displays residential units by date of construction. Teton County has a larger percentage of housing units built prior to 1960 (62.7%) compared to the rest of the state (37.6%)

Table 7: Teton County Housing Units by Date of Construction - 2005

	Single-Family	Mobile Home	Total
Prior to 1960	1685	10	1695
1960 – 1969	123	40	163
1970 - 1979	196	187	383
1080 – 1989	98	59	157
1990 – 1999	164	73	237
2000 – 2003	56	10	66
Total	**2,322**	**379**	**2701**

Source: Montana Housing Condition Study –
http://housingcdd.mt.gov/CP/18housingconditionstudy.mcpx

Table 8 displays information on housing stock by numbers of bedrooms and bathrooms in 2005. About 50% of all housing units had one or fewer bathrooms. A total of 59 percent of all units had three or more bedrooms. Most newer residential units are being constructed with two or more bathrooms.

Table 8: Teton County 2005, Housing Units by Number of Bedrooms

	1	2	3	4+	None
Bathrooms	1345	939	227	38	152
Bedrooms	254	841	1124	459	23

Source: Montana Housing Condition Stud, http://housingcdd.mt.gov/CP/18housingconditionstudy.mcpx

The Housing Condition Study defines a full bathroom as having a toilet, sink, and shower or tub. It is likely that at least some of the units have a half bathroom, defined as having a toilet or toilet and sink. The Study does not provide detailed information on how many of these units have only half bathrooms and nothing else.

The Montana Housing Condition has considerable information on physical condition of residences, based on Montana's appraisal system. The condition ratings are:

- Unsound – indicates that the dwelling is definitely structurally unsound and practically unfit for use.
- Very poor – indicates that the dwelling is definitely structurally unsound and practically unfit for use. Repair and overhaul is needed on painted surfaces, roofing, plumbing and heating. There is excessive deferred maintenance and abuse. Property is approaching abandonment or major reconstruction.
- Poor – indicates that definite deterioration is obvious. Property is undesirable and barely usable.
- Fair – indicates marked deterioration but is still quite usable. Property is rather unattractive and undesirable. Much repair is needed and many items need refinishing or overhauling. Deferred maintenance is obvious.
- Average – indicates normal wear and tear relative to its age. Property has average attractiveness and is desirable. There is some evidence of deferred maintenance needed such as minor repairs and refinishing. All major components are still functional.
- Good – indicates that minor deterioration is visible. Property is slightly more attractive and desirable. No obvious maintenance is required, but neither is everything new. Appearance is above the standard relative to the property's age.
- Very good – indicates slight evidence of deterioration. All items are well maintained and have been overhauled and repaired as they showed signs of wear. There is little deterioration or obsolescence and a high standard of upkeep relative to its age.
- Excellent – indicates perfect condition. Property is very attractive and highly desirable. All items that can be normally repaired or refinished have been recently corrected, such as new roofing, paint, furnace overhaul and state-of-the-art components. There are no functional inadequacies and all components are new or in like-new condition. Most new homes would receive a condition rating of excellent (unless constructed with substandard materials and workmanship).

Table 9: Physical Condition by Structure Type – Teton County, 2005

	Mobile Home		**Single-Family**		**Total**	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Unsound	3	0.8%	57	2.5%	60	2.2%
Very Poor	4	1.1%	89	3.8%	93	3.4%
Poor	21	5.5%	218	9.4%	239	8.8%
Fair	173	45.6%	610	26.3%	783	29.0%
Average	128	33.8%	1030	44.4%	1158	42.9%
Good	44	11.6%	229	9.9%	273	10.1%
Very Good	6	1.6%	79	3.4%	85	3.1%
Excellent	0	0%	10	0.4%	10	0.4%
Total	**379**		**2322**		**2701**	

Source: Montana Housing Condition Study, http://housingcdd.mt.gov/CP/18housingconditionstudy.mcpx

As indicated in Table 9, 14.4% of housing units in the county were rated as unsound, poor or very poor condition. This compared to 9.2% of housing units statewide with similar ratings. The largest proportion of homes were rated as fair or average condition. Mobile homes were more likely to be rated as fair while single-family homes were more likely rated as average. Just 13.6% of units were rated as good, very good, or excellent compared to a state average of 34.9%. This likely is due to the older housing stock in the county compared to newer housing stock in other parts of the state.

FACTORS RELATED TO DEMAND FOR SPECIFIC TYPES OF HOUSING

Table 10 displays information on the age of head of household for all occupied housing units in Teton County. Households headed by individuals aged 45-54 comprised the largest proportion (21.2%) of all households in Teton County in 2010, followed closely by the 55-64 age group (20,1%). Population projections indicate a potential shifts in age demographics that could potentially affect demand for specific types of housing. Number of persons in the 34-44 age category will shrink while the number of persons who are 65 years are older will increase.

Table 10: Household by Age of Householder

Age Group	Owner	Renter	Total	% of Total
15-24	19	44	63	2.6%
25-34	131	113	244	10.0%
35-44	213	105	318	13.0%
45-54	427	93	520	21.2%
55-64	415	77	492	20.1%
65-74	337	79	416	17.0%
75-84	208	60	268	10.9%
85 and older	89	40	129	5.3%
Totals	1839	611	2450	

Source: 2010 Census, Census of the Population

Table 11 displays the number and percent of households by household size. The largest percentage of households are single person households. One and two person households combined comprise 70.6% of households in the county.

Table 11: Households by Numbers of Persons: Teton County, 2010

Household Size	#	%
1-Person	719	29.3%
2-Person	1024	41.3%
3-Person	276	11.3%
4-Person	250	10.2%
5-Person	109	4.4%
6-Person	48	2.0%
7 or more Person	24	1.0%

Source: U.S. Census, Census of the Population

AFFORDABILITY OF HOUSING

As indicated in the following table, monthly housing costs in Teton County is lower than the state average and cost in the City of Choteau is lower than both the county and the state. Although, housing costs are lower, there are still households in the city that are experiencing a cost burden in regards to housing. The Census defines a household having a cost burden when 30% of more of monthly household income is being spent on monthly housing costs. As indicated in Table 1-10, almost 15% of households with incomes less than $20,000 per year experience a cost burden in regards to housing and 8% of households with incomes from $20,000 to $34,999 are experiencing a cost burden. Of households with incomes less than $20,000, renters were more likely to be experiencing a cost burden.

Table 12: Monthly Housing Cost

	CHOTEAU	TETON COUNTY	MONTANA
Median Monthly Housing Cost - Owner	$546	$688	$828
Median Monthly Housing Cost – Renter	$470	$559	$682

Table 13: % Households with Housing Cost Burden by Income Level – Teton County

<$20,000	$20,000 - $34,999	$35,000-$49,999	$50,000 - $74,000	$75,000+
14.9%	8.3%	2.9%	1.8%	0.6%

Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2009-2013

The Montana Department of Commerce, Housing coordinating team, White Paper (June, 2012) collects data for each county in an effort to document the availability of affordable and decent housing for Montana residents. According to the data from the White Paper, the median home cost in Teton County in 2010 was $105,000 compared to $175,000 for the State of Montana. There was not as much differentiated in fair market rents between the county and state. This was despite median incomes being lower in Teton County.

Table 14: Housing Prices – 2010

I	Teton County	State of Montana
Single-Family Medan Home Cost	$105,000	$175,000
Manufactured Home Median Appraised Value	$23,580	$54,270
1 Bedroom Fair Market Rent	$464	$493
2 Bedroom Fair Market Rent	$588	$611
Median Household Income	$39,516	$43,872

Source: Montana Department of Commerce, Housing coordinating team, White Paper (June, 2012)

According to the White Paper, based on annual income estimates, retail sales persons, seniors and disabled persons on fixed incomes would have difficulty purchasing an average priced home in the county.

Table 15: Affordable Share of Income for Housing - Various Occupations

	Annual Income	Affordable House Cost	Affordable Monthly Rent
Avg. all occupations	$32,745	$137,399	$819
Registered Nurse	$52,363	$219,716	$1,209
Police Officer	$35,676	$149,697	$892
Elementary School Teacher	$36,321	$152,404	$908
Retail Sales Person	$23,152	$97,146	$579
Disabled Worker, SSI	$11,908	$49,965	$298
Senior on Fixed-income, SSI	$12,764	$53,556	$319

Source: Montana Department of Commerce, Housing coordinating team, White Paper (June, 2012)

HOUSING ASSISTANCE

Housing assistance is available to persons who meet income guidelines, and to seniors and persons with disabilities. Agencies providing assistance include:

- Area Agency on Aging, Conrad
- Montana Department of Commerce, Helena - various programs under Housing Division (including CDBG and HOME programs)-available to local governments and nonprofits
- Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. of Great Falls
- Opportunities Inc., Great Falls
- Town of Dutton Housing Rehabilitation Program, Dutton
- USDA Rural Development, local office in Choteau until January 2002

1. Rental Assistance

Persons meeting income and/or age requirements are eligible for rental assistance from HUD, Section 8 Rental Voucher Program. The Section 8 voucher program for Teton County is administered by Opportunities, Inc. in Great Falls. The voucher program allows the tenant to choose a house or apartment as long as it meets program standards. Rent is paid with a combination of tenant payments and Section 8 voucher assistance. Tenants must use at least 30 percent of their adjusted gross income as payment toward rent, but can use up to 40 percent if the rental unit exceeds Section 8 Rental Standards (Table 12). The amount of voucher assistance is determined by tenant's income and family size. The Section 8 voucher program can also provide utility assistance to the tenant if utilities are not included in the rental costs.

Table 16: Section 8 Monthly Rent Standards for Units including Rent and Utilities for Teton County - 2014

Efficiency	1-Bedroom Unit	2-Bedroom Unit	3-Bedroom Unit	4-Bedroom Unit
$465	$496	$637	$883	$1,010

Source: Montana Department of Commerce

2. HUD Programs

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development programs are administered by the Montana Department of Commerce – Housing Division. Individuals, non-profits and developers may apply for various programs through local governments and non-profits. Programs include:

- Tenant Based Section 8 – Housing Choice Vouchers
- Tenant Based HUD Veteran Affairs – Supportive Housing Program
- Project Based Section 8 rental units
- Shelter Plus Rental Assistance (Homeless population with disabilities)
- Section 811 – Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities
- Low Income Housing Tax Credit

3. USDA Rural Development Programs

USDA provides homeownership opportunities to rural Americans, and home renovation and repair programs. USDA also provides financing to elderly, disabled, or low-income rural residents in multi-unit housing complexes to ensure that they are able to make rent payments.

- Single-Family Housing Direct Home Loans
- Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loan Program
- Multi-Family Housing Rental Assistance

USDA works with public and nonprofit organizations to provide housing developers with loans and grants to construct and renovate rural multi-family housing complexes. Eligible organizations include local and state governments, nonprofit groups, associations, nonprofit private corporations and cooperatives, and Native American groups.

- Single Family Housing Repair Loans and Grants
- Mutual Self-Help Housing Technical Assistance Grants
- Multi-Family Housing Direct Loans
- Farm Labor Housing Direct Loans and Grants
- Housing Preservation Grants
- Rural Housing Site Loans

USDA works with private lenders to provide multi-family loan guarantees. USDA Rural Development subsidized housing in the county includes:

Table 17: Subsidized & Elderly Housing, Teton County

Location	Name	Type/Description	Number Units
Choteau	Choteau Transitional Living Complex	5 apartments dedicated for Developmentally Disabled	6 units 4 Subsidized
Choteau	Sunset Court	16 apartments; 8 units each in two buildings: 14 2-BR, 2 1-BR	16 units 15 subsidized
Choteau	Skyline	Elderly – Disabled	30 units
Dutton	Sunshine Trail Lodge	10 apartments; mix of 1- and 2-BR units, dedicated for elderly/handicapped	10 units 6 subsidized
Fairfield	Fairmont	8 apartments, all dedicated to elderly and handicapped	8 units 5 subsidized
Fairfield	Teton Court	12 apartments, dedicated to elderly and handicapped	8 units

Sources: Montana Dept. of Commerce – Housing Division

- **Neighborhood Housing Services** - Provides assistance to first time homebuyers. Neighborhood Housing Services is the Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) serving Teton County. They provide down payment and closing cost assistance and also assist with foreclosure prevention. Neighborhood Housing Services has assisted 16 households in Teton County since Neighborhood Housing Services first started in 1997. (Nebel)

4. Housing Rehabilitation and Utility Assistance

USDA Rural Development, Area Agency on Aging, Opportunities Inc., and the town of Dutton provide housing rehabilitation assistance in Teton County.

- **Area Agency on Aging –** The agency is located in Conrad and serves Toole, Teton, and Pondera Counties. It administers the Low Income Energy Assistance Program for persons needing help paying utility bills. Assistance is provided to persons of any age based on income, number of persons in the household, number of rooms in the housing unit, type of fuel, and other factors. Assistance is provided from October 1 through April 30 of each year. In Teton County, a total of 107 households applied for assistance and 96 households were approved for the 2001-02 season (Jensen). Those households that are approved for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program are also eligible for weatherization programs provided by **Opportunities Inc.** of Great Falls. The Area Agency on Aging in Conrad also provides assistance for heating emergencies such as furnace repair. In the three months between October 1 and December 21, 2001, six emergencies in the multi-county area have met the application criteria for assistance. Three of these emergencies were in Teton County (Jensen).

- **The Town of Dutton -** Has a housing rehabilitation program, financed by Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME program funds, town of Dutton, and Dutton State Bank. The town's Housing Board reviews applications for the program.

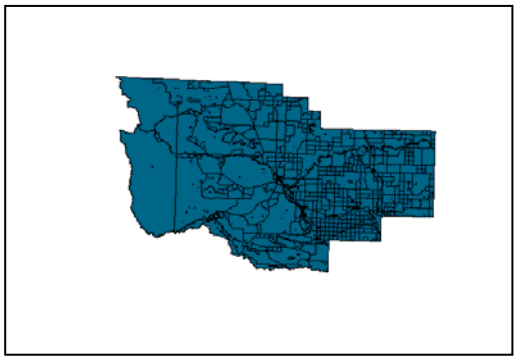
GROUP QUARTERS

The U.S. Census Bureau defines group quarters as those quarters that house all persons not living in households. Typical types of group quarters include nursing care facilities, group homes, detention centers, and dormitories. A total of 133 persons were counted as living in group quarters in the 2010 census. Table 14 displays group quarters in Teton County. The Skyline Lodge in Choteau provide independent living for seniors and are classified as multi-family units instead of group quarters.

Table 18: Group Quarters in Teton County, 2001

Facility Name/Location	Type	Capacity
Choteau Activities, Inc. Group Home, Choteau	Group Home for Developmentally Disabled	8
Beehive Homes, Choteau	Assisted Living for seniors over age 55	10
Teton Medical Center Nursing Home, Choteau	Nursing Home	31 general nursing home beds; 8 special care locked facility beds
Teton County Nursing Home, Choteau	Nursing Home	41
Front Range Assisted Living, Fairfield	Assisted Living	15

Sources: Telephone interviews with agencies listed in table.



LAND USE

KEY FINDINGS

The land use section is an inventory of land use patterns community character and development trends. Its provides a basis for guiding future development so that development preserves the desirable qualities of the areas while meeting needs for growth and economic development. The land use section also indicates which areas are most suitable for development and note issues that should be addressed through specific measures. Some key findings in this section:

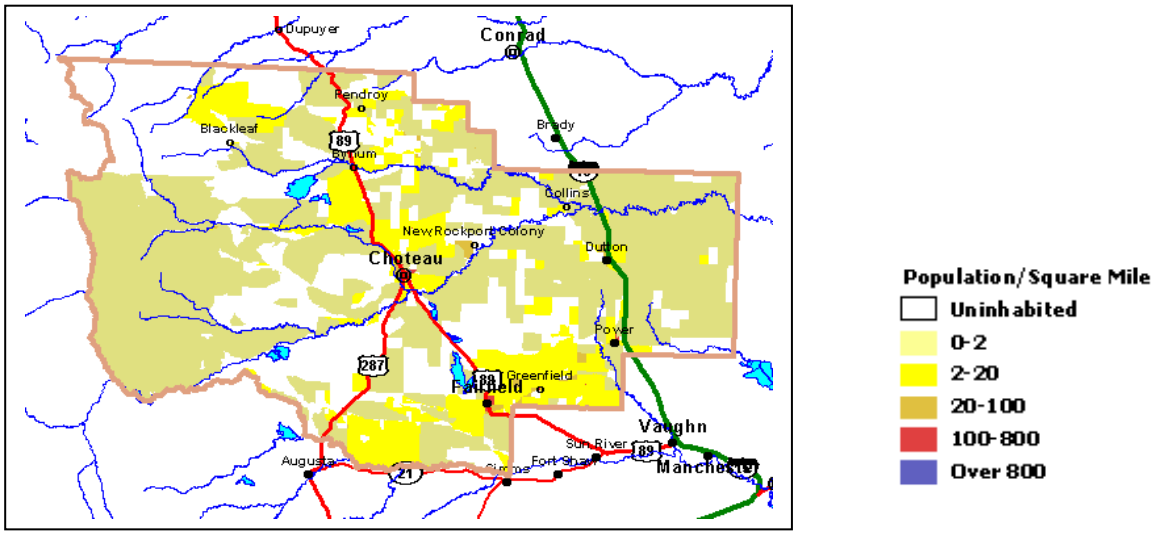
- Teton County has a variable landscape ranging from mountains to sweeping plains.
- Teton County has a low population density compared to the State average. Population is concentrated near the incorporated towns.
- Publicly owned land comprises 27% of all land in Teton County. The majority of this land is part of the Lewis and Clark National Forest.
- There are three distinct divisions of land use in the County with cropland being the dominant use in the eastern portion, range land the dominant use in the central portion, and forested mountain ranges being the dominant use in the west portion of the County.
- There was an increase in the number of farms and a decrease in the average size of farms since 1997. There was a decrease in the percentage of farmers who listed farming as their primary occupation.
- Overall acreage in farms increased as CRP enrollments expired and land was put back in production.
- Wheat crops comprised the largest percentage of cultivated land. The County ranks first in the state in barley production.
- Developed areas have a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial land uses that represent the historic development patterns of the community and may not meet the needs of modern developments.
- Slopes, flood hazards, and hazardous waste sites are present in the County and need to be accounted for in development policies.
- The acreage of land in conservation easements increased since the year 2000.

GEOGRAPHY

Teton County is located in north central Montana on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. The Rocky Mountain front comprises the western border of the county with the north fork of the Sun River forming the southern border. The Teton River begins in the northwestern corner and continues east through the County to join the Missouri River. The landscape consists of rolling lowlands and bench prairie, hills, and mountains. Elevations range from over 9,000 feet in the Lewis and Clark National Forest on the west end of the County to around 3,300 feet in the eastern most portion of the County.

The land area for Teton County is 2,273 square miles and according to the 2010 Census the County has an average density of 2.7 people per square mile. This compares to a statewide average of 6.8 people per square mile. Within Teton County the population is concentrated around the incorporated municipalities and within close proximity to the major transportation corridors. The Hutterite colonies also represent pockets of higher density areas. The public lands in the northwest portion of the County are uninhabited as are large tracts of agricultural land scattered throughout the County.

Figure 1: Population per Square mile



Source: Montana Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) Geographic Information System (GIS), Based on US Bureau of the Census, "Census of the Population – 2000"

The major transportation routes generally provide north-to-south access through the County. They include Interstate 15 on the east and US Highways 89 and 287 in the center of the County. I-15 provides convenient access south to Great Falls, the nearest metropolitan area located about 30 miles south of the County. US Highway 89 continues north to Glacier National Park. In addition to the rivers and streams, major water features are limited to Freezout Lake and several manmade reservoirs. Surface water comprises only 0.6% of the total County land area.

LAND OWNERSHIP

The County is comprised of 72% privately owned land, 19% of land under various Federal agencies and 8% State owned land. Most of the Federal owned land is within the Lewis and Clark National Forest. (See Natural Resources Chapter) In the southwest corner of the County there are some scattered, small privately owned in-holdings within the Forest boundaries. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) holdings are primarily adjacent to the Lewis and Clark National Forest and include Special Recreation Management Areas (SMRA) and Outstanding Natural Areas (ONA). (See Natural Resource Chapter).

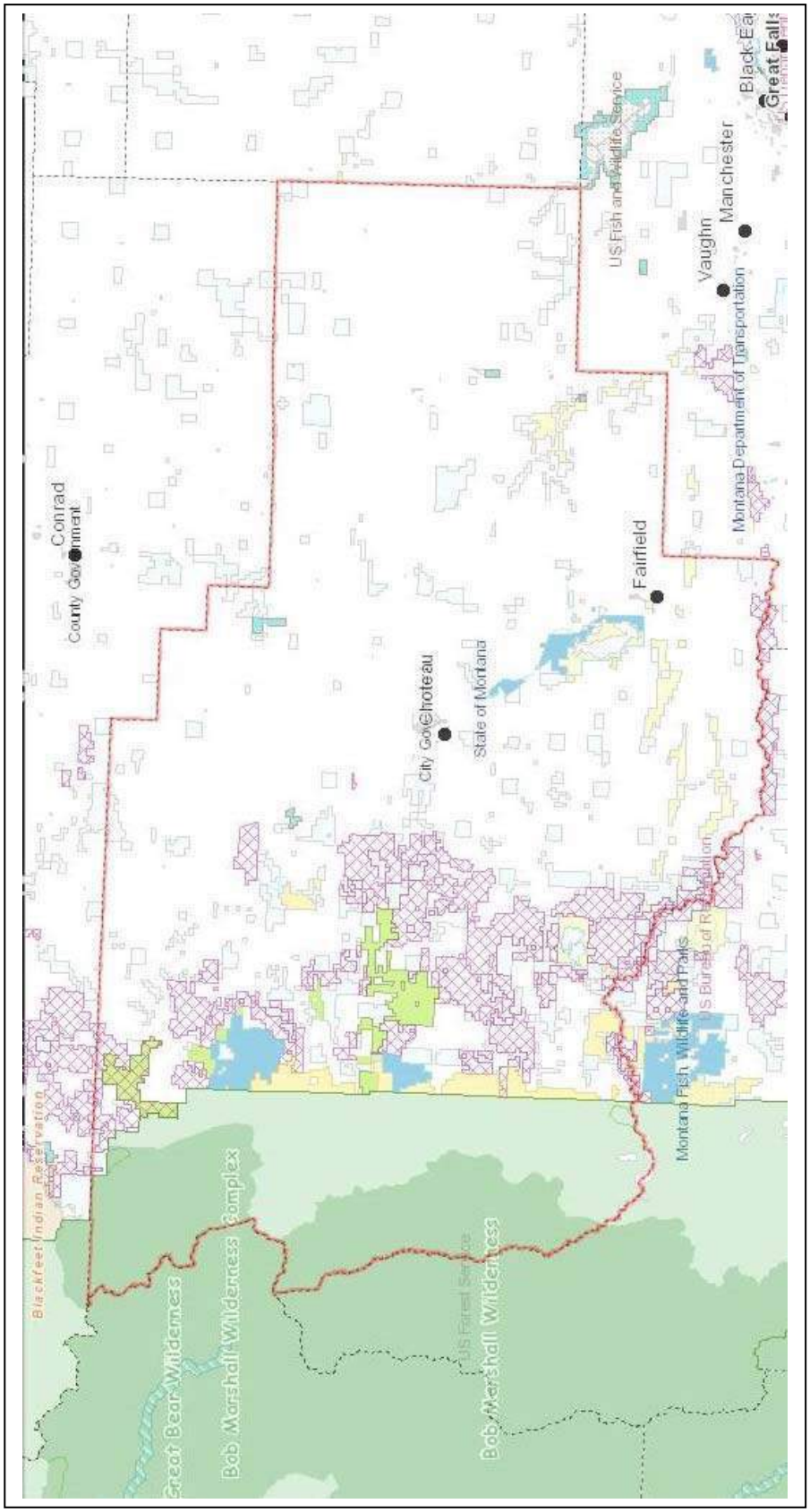
The State of Montana Land is comprised of State Trust Lands and State Wildlife Management Areas (See Natural Resources Chapter). The trust lands are scattered throughout the County. The income derived from state trust land including rentals is available for the maintenance and support of schools and institutions. The Trust Land Management Division administers land for the other state agencies in addition to state trust land. The division is divided into four bureaus that represent the different types of land uses: Agriculture and Grazing Management, Forest Management, Minerals Management, and Special Use Management. In Teton County, trust land is primarily used for agriculture and grazing.

Table 1: Land Ownership in Teton County

Owner	**Acres**	**% of Total**
U.S. Forest Service	234,354	16%
Montana State Trust Land	107,318	7%
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	22,813	2%
U.S. Bureau of Land Management	19,338	1%
Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks	17,568	1%
Water	15,991	1%
US Fish and Wildlife Service	1,764	<1%
Total Public Lands	**404,240**	**28%**
Other		
Private Conservation Land	21,446	1
Conservation Easement	109,944	8%
TOTAL	**1,465,684**	

Source: Natural Heritage Map Viewer. Montana Natural Heritage Program. Retrieved on 7-27-15 http://mtnhp.org/MapViewer/

Figure 2: Land Ownership in Teton County



Source: Natural Heritage Map Viewer. Montana Natural Heritage Program. Retrieved on 7-27-15 http://mtnhp.org/MapViewer/

LAND USE PATTERNS

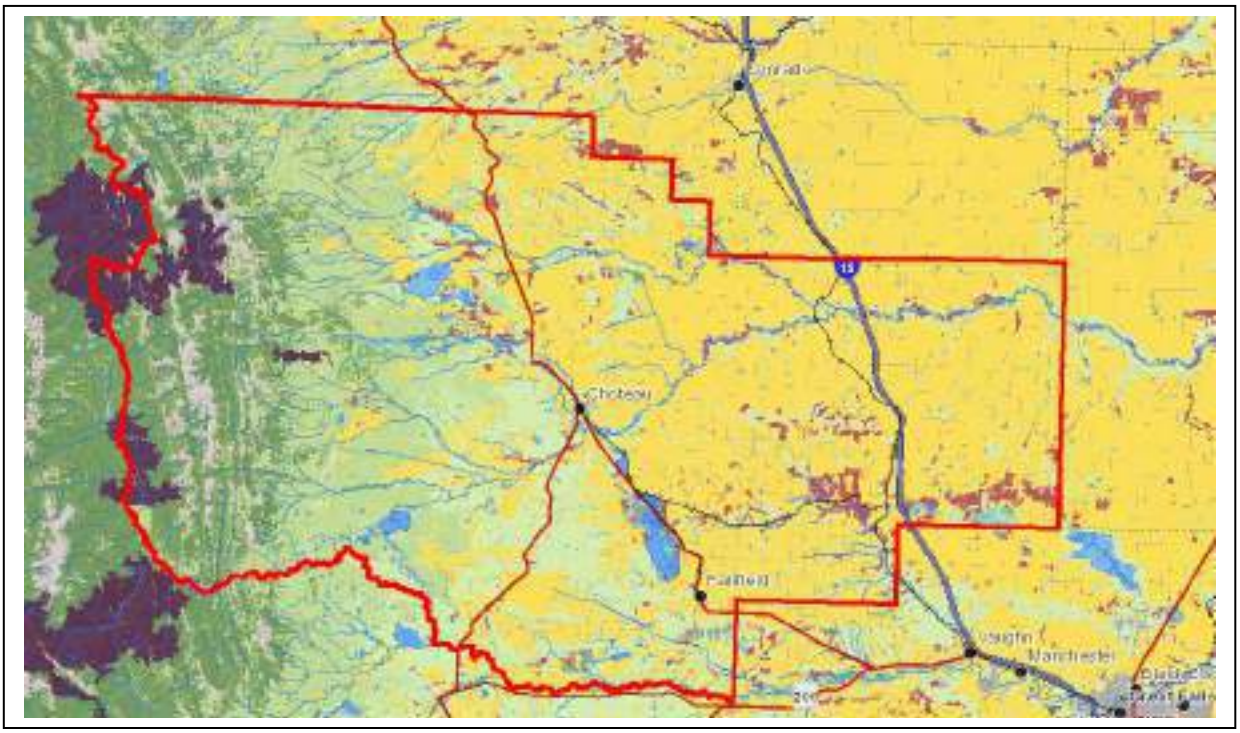
Agriculture and grassland comprise 70% of the County's land area. Urbanized areas comprise the smallest category of land use representing only 0.3% of the entire area in the County. The forested areas are located in the west portion of the County along the Rocky Mountain front in primarily the Lewis and Clark National Forest. Agriculture land is the dominant land use in the east half of the County while rangeland is located mostly adjacent to the national forest in the west half of the County.

Table 2: Land Use and Acreage in Teton County

Type	Acres	Percent
Cultivated Crops	552,625	38%
Grassland (Lowland/Prairie)	247,872	17%
Grassland (Lower Montane/foothills)	173,121	12%
Forest/Woodland	97,790	6%
Recently Disturbed vegetation	47,443	3%
Alpine	28,103	2%
Pasture/Hay	23,009	2%
Recently Burned	33,107	2%
Shrubland	23,385	2%
Upper Montane Grassland	24,604	2%

Source: Montana Ecological Systems - Landcover Report - Teton County, Natural Heritage Map Viewer. Montana Natural Heritage Program. Retrieved on July 29, 2015, from http://mtnhp.org/mapviewer/LandcoverReport.aspx?x=398579.45748793485&y=400628.2606223541&v=0

Figure 3: Land Use in Teton County



Source: Natural Heritage Map Viewer. Montana Natural Heritage Program. Retrieved on 7-27-15 http://mtnhp.org/MapViewer/

AGRICULTURAL LAND USE

1. Farm Characteristics

According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, there were 742 farms in Teton County compared to 770 farms in 2007. Although there was a slight decrease in farms from 2007 to 2012, the overall number of farms, there are 142 more farms in 2012 than in 1997 when there were a total of 557 farms. While the number of farms has increased, the average size of farm decreased from 2,005 acres in 1997 to 1,314 acres in 2012. About 10% of farmland in the county is irrigated.

The total amount of acreage in farms in 2012 was 1,454,469 and was actually greater than the amount of acreage in farms in 1997 at 1,116,889 acres. There is less land in the conservation reserve program than in 1997 and this accounts for a large portion of the additional acreage now being farmed. It appears that in Teton County, the trend over the last 15 years has been towards smaller farms. This is opposite of the state and national trends which indicate that the average size farm has increased in size. The average size of farms in Teton County in 1997 was 2,005 acres compared to 1,314 acres in 2012. Statewide, the average size of farms in 2012 was 2,134 acres.

The percentage of farmers that report that farming is their principal occupation has decreased from 72.8% in 1997 to 58.9% in 2012. Although, the average age of the farm decreased from 58.9 in 2007 to 56.9 in 2012, the average age is still significantly higher than in 1997.

Table 3: Summary of Farm Statistics for Teton County

Item	**1997**	**2007**	**2012**
Number of Farms	557	770	742
Average Size (acres)	2005	1,497	1,314
Farming is Principal Operation	72.8%	55.1%	58.8%
Average Age of Operator	51.3	58.9	56.9
Total land in Farms (acres)	1,116,889	1,152,691	1,454,469
Irrigated Land (acres)	--	111,289	114,794

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Agriculture, 1997, 2007, 2012

2) Cropland

The United States Census of Agriculture indicates that in 2012, 114,794 acres of cropland was irrigated. Major irrigated acres lie north and east of Choteau and consist of the Bynum Irrigation Project, Teton Co-op Canal Company, Farmers Co-op Canal Company and the Eldorado Canal Company, along with several private ditches. The Greenfield Irrigation project near Fairfield, operated and maintained by the Federal Bureau of Reclamation, is the largest project in the County. Hay and grains are the primary irrigated crops.

The largest areas of dry cropland are in the eastern half of the County with winter wheat and barley being the principle crops. Teton County is the largest producer in the state of barley. Statewide there has been growth in the amount of acreage planted for pulse crops for peas & lentils. While still a small percentage of overall acreage in the county, Teton County also experienced growth in these types of crops.

Table 4: Crop Production in Teton County

	2007		2012	
	#	Acres	#	Acres
Barley	164	64,116	211	85,069
Wheat	196	148,286	173	150,736
Hay	273	64,334	279	47,000
Peas & Lentils	14	4,751	29	8,760

Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistic Service, Census of Agriculture, 2012

Other recent national and statewide trends include the growth in certified organic farms, harvesting biomass for renewable energy, value-added agriculture and farms that market directly to retail stores. As noted below, a very small number of farms are engaged in these activities.

- Teton County # of USDA Certified Organic Farms = 8
- Teton County # of farms that harvested biomass for renewable energy = 2
- Teton County # of farms that marketed direct to retail outlets = 9
- Teton County # of farms that produce value-added agriculture = 38

Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistic Service, Census of Agriculture, 2012, Table 43

3) Rangeland

There are approximately 544,470 acres of rangeland in Teton County. The majority of this rangeland lies west of U.S. Highway 89 and is primarily used for livestock grazing. The land is generally not suited to more intensive agricultural uses. Some creek and valley bottoms; however, are irrigated on an individual basis. Rangeland in the east half of the County generally consists of rough breaks and coulees following water courses. There is some rangeland scattered in areas of low agricultural productivity. These areas provide pasture and rangeland for dryland farmers who wish to augment their farming operation. Table 5 provides a more detailed breakdown of the types of rangeland.

Table 5: Rangeland in Teton County

Rangeland	**Acreage**
Grass Rangeland	328,651
Mixed Rangeland	118,409
Brush Rangeland	97,410
Total	**544,470**

Source: Montana Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) Geographic Information System (GIS)

While some rangeland may be suited only for low intensity grazing, these lands are regarded as having high scenic, open space, and environmental value. In general, the high winds and dry conditions have not been conducive to residential development. Recent subdivisions in the area have indicated more interest in the area.

According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, livestock and livestock production account for 41% of the total agricultural receipts in the County. Teton County ranks 18st among Counties in the State for the number of all cattle. Other livestock includes sheep and hogs.

Table 6: Livestock in Teton County

Livestock	**Number**	**Rank**
All Cattle & Calves	58,000	18
Beef Cows & Heifers	33,000	16
Milk Cows & Heifers	400	7
All Sheep & Lambs	4,900	13
Hogs & Pigs	11,100	8

Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistic Service, 2013

4) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) & other Conservation Programs

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) includes rental payments to farmers to take sensitive lands out of production. The purpose of the CRP is to reduce soil erosion, protect the Nation's ability to produce food and fiber, reduce sedimentation in streams and lakes, improve water quality, establish wildlife habitat, and enhance forest and wetland resources. The CRP is a voluntary program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Producers enroll land in the program and receive 10 to 15 year contracts that provide them with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. It encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as tame or native grasses, wildlife plantings, trees, filterstrips, or riparian buffers. Cost-sharing is provided to establish the vegetative cover practices. The program has been in operation since 1987. As indicated in Table 7, fewer farms are participating in the program since 2007.

There are also a number of other USDA programs to assist people with their conservation needs. These programs offer technical assistance or include cost-share funds to implement various conservation practices. All programs are voluntary. Some other cost-share programs relevant to Teton County include:

Conservation Reserve Program
The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a land conservation program administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA). In exchange for a yearly rental payment, farmers enrolled in the program agree to remove environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and plant species that will improve environmental health and quality. Contracts for land enrolled in CRP are 10-15 years in length. The long-term goal of the program is to re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and reduce loss of wildlife habitat. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) pays a yearly rental payment in exchange for farmers removing environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and planting species that will improve environmental quality.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), an offshoot of CRP, targets high-priority conservation issues identified by government and non-governmental organizations. Farm land that falls under these conservation issues is removed from production in exchange for annual rental payments.

Farmable Wetlands Program
The Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP) is designed to restore wetlands and wetland buffer zones that are farmed. FWP gives farmers and ranchers annual rental payments in return for restoring wetlands and establishing plant cover.

Table 7 : Statistics on Teton County farms participating in the Conservation Reserve, Wetlands Reserve, Farmable Wetlands and Total Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

	2007	2012
Number of Farms	322	228
Total acreage in programs	5,689,000	2,477,000
Average per farm in program	$17,668	$10,866

Source: Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistic Service, Census of Agriculture, 2012, Table 5

DEVELOPED AREAS

The incorporated areas of Choteau, Fairfield, and Dutton account for most of the developed land in the County. Additional unincorporated areas include the Bynum, Pendroy, and Power. Power is the only unincorporated area that has a community water and sewer system. Power also has a small commercial area. The unincorporated area of Collins is on the rail line and has a major grain elevator operation.

1) Choteau

Choteau is located in the center of Teton County and is the County seat as well as the largest community in the County. The major roadways include US Highway 89 and US Highway 287. Commercial development is adjacent along the entire stretch of US 89 throughout Choteau with auto oriented uses such as auto sales, service stations, larger retailers located on the south entrance to town. The center of town has retail main street businesses and government buildings. Business activity becomes less intense on the northern edge of town.

Choteau has two industrial areas that include the grain elevators and associated businesses in the center of town adjacent to the railroad. The second industrial area includes light industrial uses along MT 221 on the east side of town. This area also includes a commercial campground. The airport is located northeast of town. Institutional uses include the hospital and school campuses generally located on the west part of town. The two major parks are located near the center of town with a mini-park that serves the south side. A golf course located adjacent to the airport provides additional recreation and open space opportunities.

The residential part of town is primarily single-family homes. Older homes are concentrated in the center of town. Newer residential development has occurred on the west side of town. There are several subdivisions in this area that have available lots for building. The City has a zoning ordinance and the Zoning Board and Board of Adjustment meets as needed to consider changes of zoning, subdivision and variations. There have been a number of small annexations in the City in the last ten years. Figure 5 indicates the planning area that has been designated in the City of Choteau's Growth Policy.

Figure 4: Choteau Major Land Use Features

Figure 5: City of Choteau – Growth Policy Planning Area

2. Fairfield

Fairfield is located in southeast Teton County and is the second largest community in the County. It is served by US Highway 89. Commercial development is adjacent along the east side of US 89 with auto oriented uses such as service stations located in the center of this stretch. The center of town, along First Avenue has retail/main street businesses and government buildings. Office uses are located south of First Avenue between Highway 89 and downtown.

The west side of Highway 89 in Fairfield is an industrial area that includes the grain elevator and seed operations adjacent to the railroad. The airport is located several miles north of town on Highway 89. The main institutional use is the school campus on the east side of town. There is a park located near the center of town along the main commercial corridor. A private golf course located south of town provides additional recreation and open space opportunities.

The residential part of town is primarily single-family homes. Older homes are concentrated in the center of town. Newer residential development with city and sewer water services include Barley View addition with 7 lots on the north side of town and Westridge Estates with 11 lots on the west side of town. There has been some fringe development in the county adjacent to the east side of town that does not have sewer or water service.

The city has a zoning ordinance and hearings for changes of zoning and variations are conducted by the City Council. The County Planning Board conducts hearings for subdivisions.

Figure 6: Fairfield Major Land Use Features

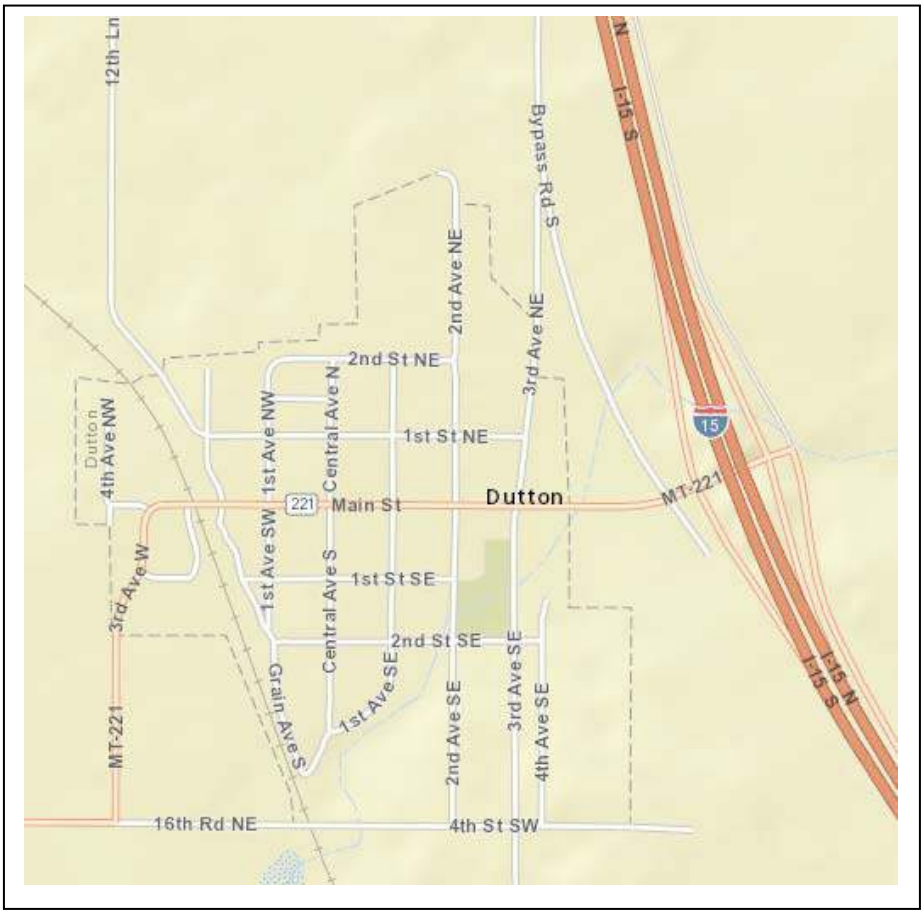
3) Dutton

Dutton is located on Interstate-15 in eastern Teton County. It is the smallest of the incorporated communities in the County. There is some commercial development located adjacent to the Interstate but the primary commercial development is along Main Street through the center of town. This includes retail, finance, and government buildings.

An industrial area includes the grain elevators and related operations and is adjacent to the railroad. The airport is located east of the Interstate. The main institutional use is the school campus on the north side of town. There are several parks that are located throughout town.

The residential part of town is primarily single-family homes. There has been little new development in Dutton. Although there are a number of vacant lots in town; few are available for sale. The city recently annexed 29 acres of unimproved land for residential development. The city has a zoning ordinance and hearings for changes of zoning and variations are conducted by the City Council.

Figure 7: Dutton Major Land Use Features



DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

1) Subdivision

There are three types of plats that may be filed with the County Clerk and Recorder that creates new lots.

Subdivisions	The division of land that creates one or more parcels for the purpose of selling, renting, leasing or conveying the land. In Montana, subdivisions that create parcels containing less than 160 acres are subject to the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act and local regulations.
Certificate of Surveys	Land divisions that are exempt from local government review and approval as subdivisions, but which must be surveyed and a certificate of survey filed (without local subdivision approval) before title can be transferred. This includes any parcel 160 acres or larger in size or parcels less than 160 acres but exempt under provisions for a family transfer, agricultural purpose, or relocation of a common boundary line.
Minor Subdivisions	Subdivisions that have five or fewer lots, have proper access to all lots, and have no land that would be dedicated to the public for parks. The submission requirements and review procedures are streamlined for minor subdivisions.
Major Subdivisions	All subdivisions that are not exempt under certificate of surveys or that do not meet the criteria for minor subdivisions.

Subdivisions resulted in an increase of 147 lots from 2004 to 2014. Most of the subdivision activity has occurred around Choteau, Fairfield and the Fairfield bench areas. Subdivision activity peaked in 2008 and but has been considerably less since 2011.

Table 8: Major Subdivisions in Teton County from 2000 - 2014

Year	**Total # Additional Lots**
2004	3
2005	17
2006	10
2007	15
2008	48
2009	17
2010	22
2011	6
2012	2
2013	5
2014	2
Total	147

Source: Teton County Clerk

2. Conservation Easements

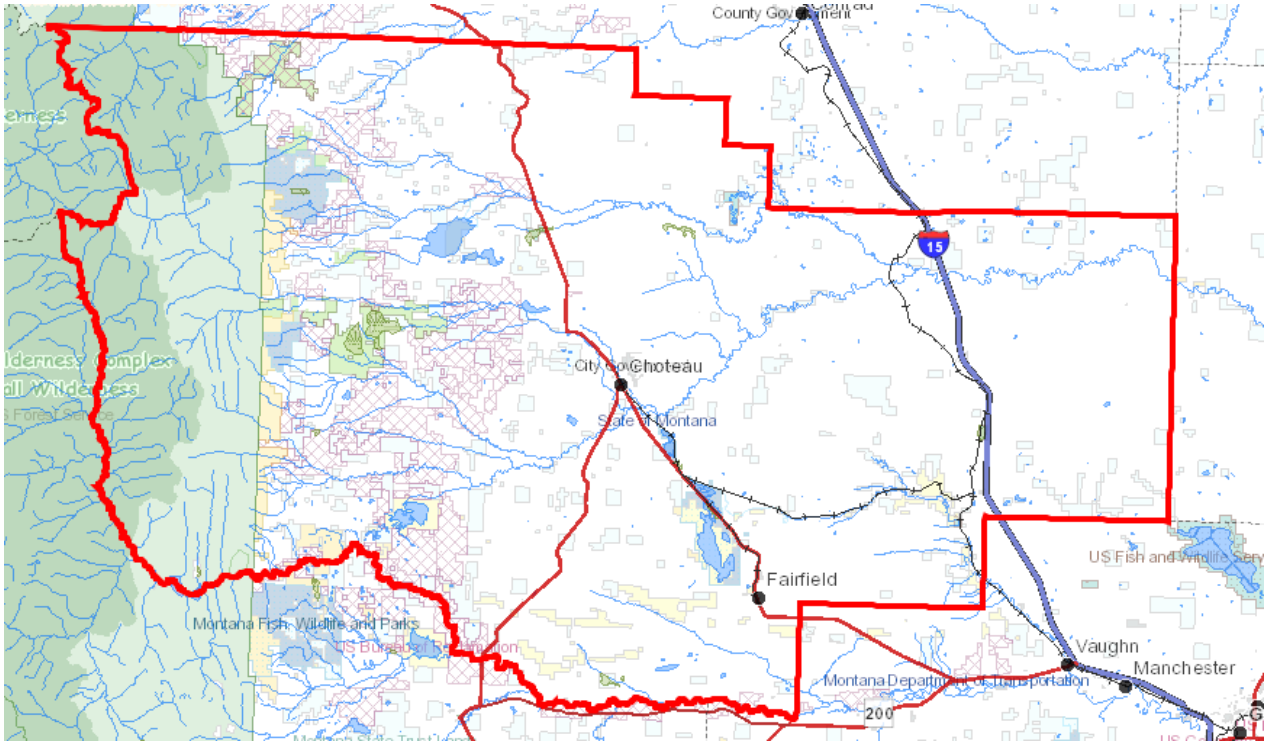
Conservation easements are a way to preserve land from certain types of future development. A conservation easement allows a landowner to maintain ownership and current use of the land while preventing subdivisions and preserving an economically viable agricultural operation and wildlife habitat. Conservation easements are voluntary, with property owners establishing the easement through recording a legal document with the County Clerk that is perpetual and runs with the land. Often there are tax benefits through the easements. A number of organizations work with landowners to establish or purchase easements for land that has significant habitat, scenic, or other natural value.

Table 9: Acres of Conservation Easements and Private Conservation Land in Teton County

Easement or Land Holder	**Acres**
Conservation Easement	
Montana Land Reliance	1,498
The Nature Conservancy	66,370
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	2,303
The Conservation Fund	7,367
US Fish and Wildlife	26,056
US Dept. of Agriculture	6,350
Private Conservation Lands	
The Nature Conservancy	15,379
Boone and Crockett Club	6,067

Source: Montana Natural Heritage Program. Retrieved on , from http://mtn7-29-15 hp.org/MapViewer/

Figure 8: Conservation Easements



Source: Montana Natural Heritage Map Viewer,, http://mtnhp.org/

Note: For additional detail see the Teton County Map page:
https://tcmt.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html

Acres

234,354 Acres	US Forest Service	17,568 Acres	Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
19,338 Acres	US Bureau of Land Management	19 Acres	Montana Department of Transportation
1,764 Acres	US Fish and Wildlife Services	44 Acres	State of Montana
22,813 Acres	US Bureau of Reclamation	962 Acres	Local Government
60 Acres	US Department of Defense	21,739 Acres	Private Conservation Lands
107,318 Acres	Montana State Trust Lands	109,944 Acres	Conservation Easements

HISTORIC, CULTURAL AND SCENIC RESOURCES

Teton County was formed in 1893 from a portion of Chouteau County. The City of Choteau, incorporated in 1913, became the county seat. Teton County originally encompassed a much larger area until Toole, Glacier, and Pondera counties were formed. The first permanent residents in the County were squatters and cattlemen who settled near the military forts and trading posts at Fort Shaw, Choteau, and Dupuyer. With the introduction of irrigation such as the Sun River Irrigation Project and the Greenfield District, settlement increased, particularly in the Fairfield area. The railroad also played a major role in settlement with the Town of Dutton and other unincorporated areas being established along rail lines and spurs.

Evidence of pre-settlement and pioneer settlement history are found at various archaeological and historic sites throughout the County. Teton County has 12 archaeological sites and 26 cultural resources sites, with 20 of these sites being of prehistoric origin. A 1992 University of Montana study documented the discoveries at these sites including combinations of stone circles with rock cairns, isolated rock cairns, trail ruts and artifact scatters. Historic sites include historic cabins and foundations, cultural material scatters, a historic kiln, and a snare trap. Possible Indian burial grounds may also exist in the area, although no human remains have been reported.

The Montana State Historic Preservation Office maintains a “Cultural Resource Information Systems” database that catalogues each specific structure or artifact of historic significance in the County. The database includes over 300 listings. It includes buildings, historic trails, rail lines, bridges, farmstead buildings, irrigation systems, and pre-historic finds. The sites are located County wide on private, state, and Federal lands.

The historic “Old North Trail” passes through Teton County. The name refers to a Native American trail system which consisted of foot, dog, horse travois and Red River cart trails. The trail runs along the eastern front of the Rocky Mountains in north central Montana and follows the backbone of the Rockies from Alaska down into Mexico. The Metis Cultural Recovery, Inc.(MCRI) was formed in 1997 to preserve the history of the Trail.

The Teton County Courthouse in Choteau is on the National Historic Register. There is also a walking tour of buildings in Choteau list 20 notable sites. Several buildings date back prior to 1900. The Courthouse was built in 1906 with stone taken from Rattlesnake Butte south of town. The Courthouse underwent renovations in 2001. Other notable sites include the Old Trail Museum in Choteau, the old Catholic Mission, and remains of the area’s first town; Old Agency.

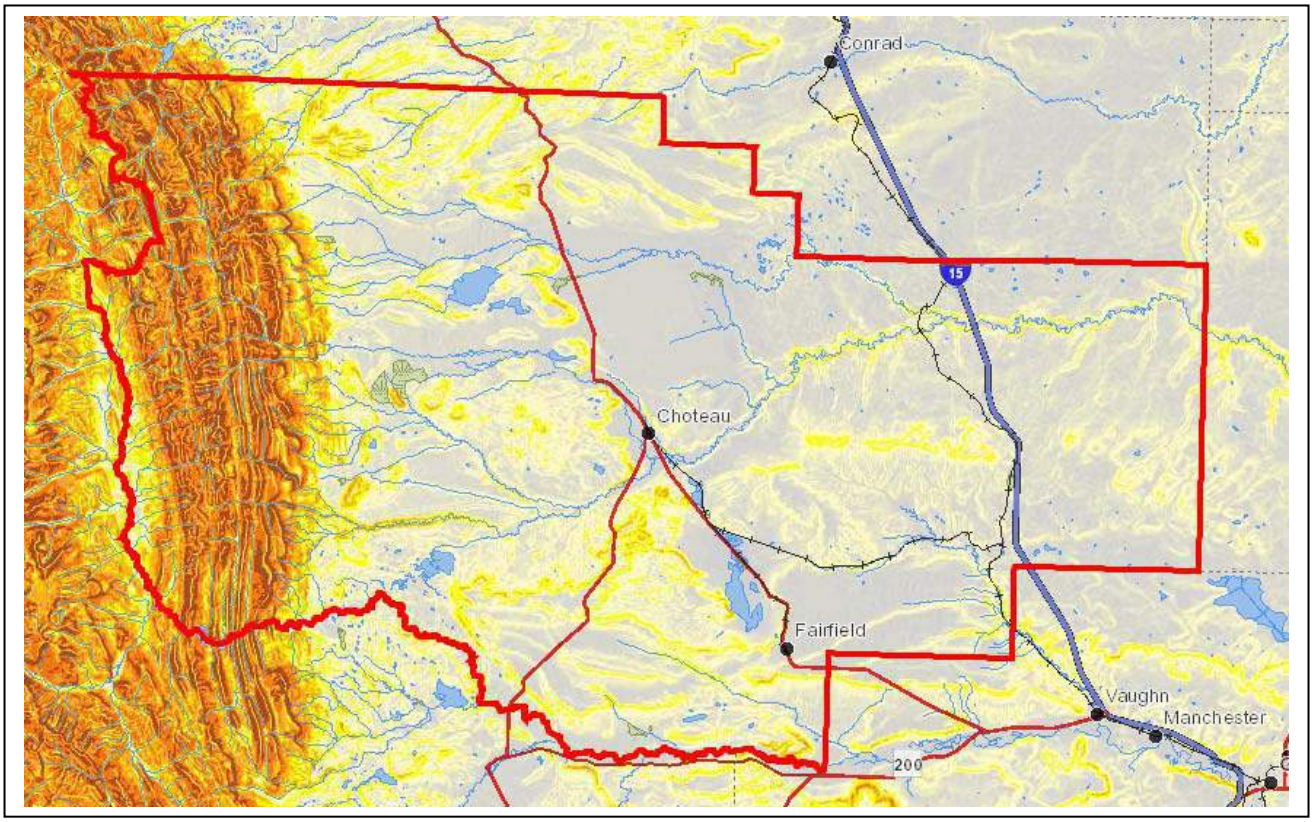
In addition to the historic areas, Teton County’s location along the Rocky Mountain front provides it with exceptional scenic resources. The Lewis and Clark National Forest-Teton Roadless area contains special features such as rugged limestone reefs that fringe the eastern border of the Blackleaf-Dupuyer area, and a waterfall framed by 1,000 foot high sheer cliffs in the Muddy Creek Canyon area. US Highway 89 that traverses the County is classified as a “Scenic Route”.

SENSITIVE LANDS

1) Slopes

Slopes up to 8% are generally most suited for development. Slopes between 25-35% have extensive engineering limitations while slopes over 35% are generally not suitable for development. Steep slopes cause soil erosion and are subject to falling rocks and slope instability. The landscape in Teton County is characterized by rolling hills that can create steep slopes in areas. Additionally, there may be sharp elevation changes near the mountains.

Figure 9 : Slopes in Teton County

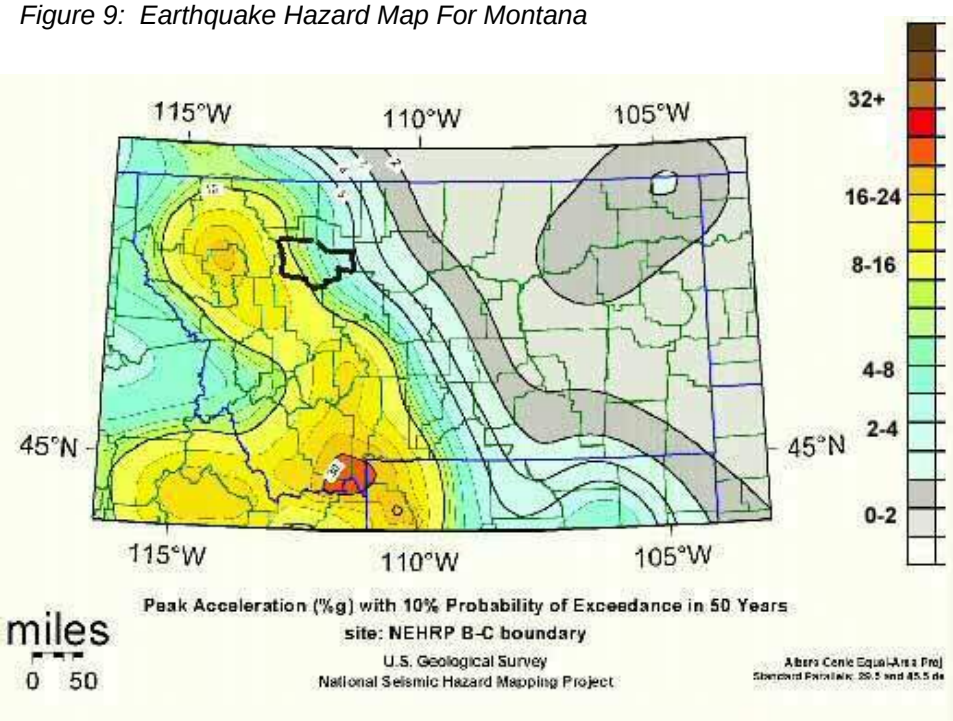


2) Earthquake Hazards

A belt of seismicity known as the Intermountain Seismic Belt extends through western Montana, from the Flathead Lake region in the northwest corner of the state to the Yellowstone National Park region. In western Montana, the Intermountain Seismic Belt is up to 100 km wide. The western part of Teton County is included in this area. Engineers use national maps of the earthquake shaking hazard in the United States to create the seismic-risk maps and seismic design provisions contained in building codes. Local government agencies use building codes, such as the Uniform Building Code, to help establish the construction requirements necessary to preserve public health and safety in earthquakes.

The 1996 U.S. Geological Survey shaking-hazard maps for the United States are based on current information about the rate at which earthquakes occur in different areas and how far strong shaking extends from quake sources. Colors on the particular map show the levels of horizontal shaking that have a one in ten chance of being exceeded in a 50 year period. Figure 8 indicates the severity of earthquakes is likely to be higher in western Teton County. The County is generally rated in the low to mid range for earthquake hazards.

Figure 9: Earthquake Hazard Map For Montana



3 Flood Hazards

The principal streams are the Teton River, North Fork of the Sun River, Sun River, and Deep Creek. The Teton River, along with its tributaries drains most of Teton County. It flows easterly through the County. The North Fork of the Sun River above Gibson Dam drains most the mountainous western edge of the County. Sun River flows easterly along the southern boundary of Teton County. Spring Creek, a much smaller stream, flows southeasterly to its confluence with Teton River southeast of Choteau. Muddy Creek flows between Collins and Bynum.

Precipitation falls mostly during the April-to-September growing season, averages 11.5 inches annually. At higher elevations this average amounts increases to 60 inches. Snowfall accumulates and the snow melts that take place in late spring and early summer add appreciably to streamflows.

Several off-stream storage projects exist north of the Teton River upstream of Choteau. Bynum, Farmers, and Eureka Reservoirs all receive their water for irrigation from the Teton River and indirectly provide some flood control to downstream lands. On the Sun River, there are two U.S. Bureau of Reclamation projects. Gibson Dam and Pishkin Reservoir are major suppliers of irrigation water and provide additional storage with some flood control.

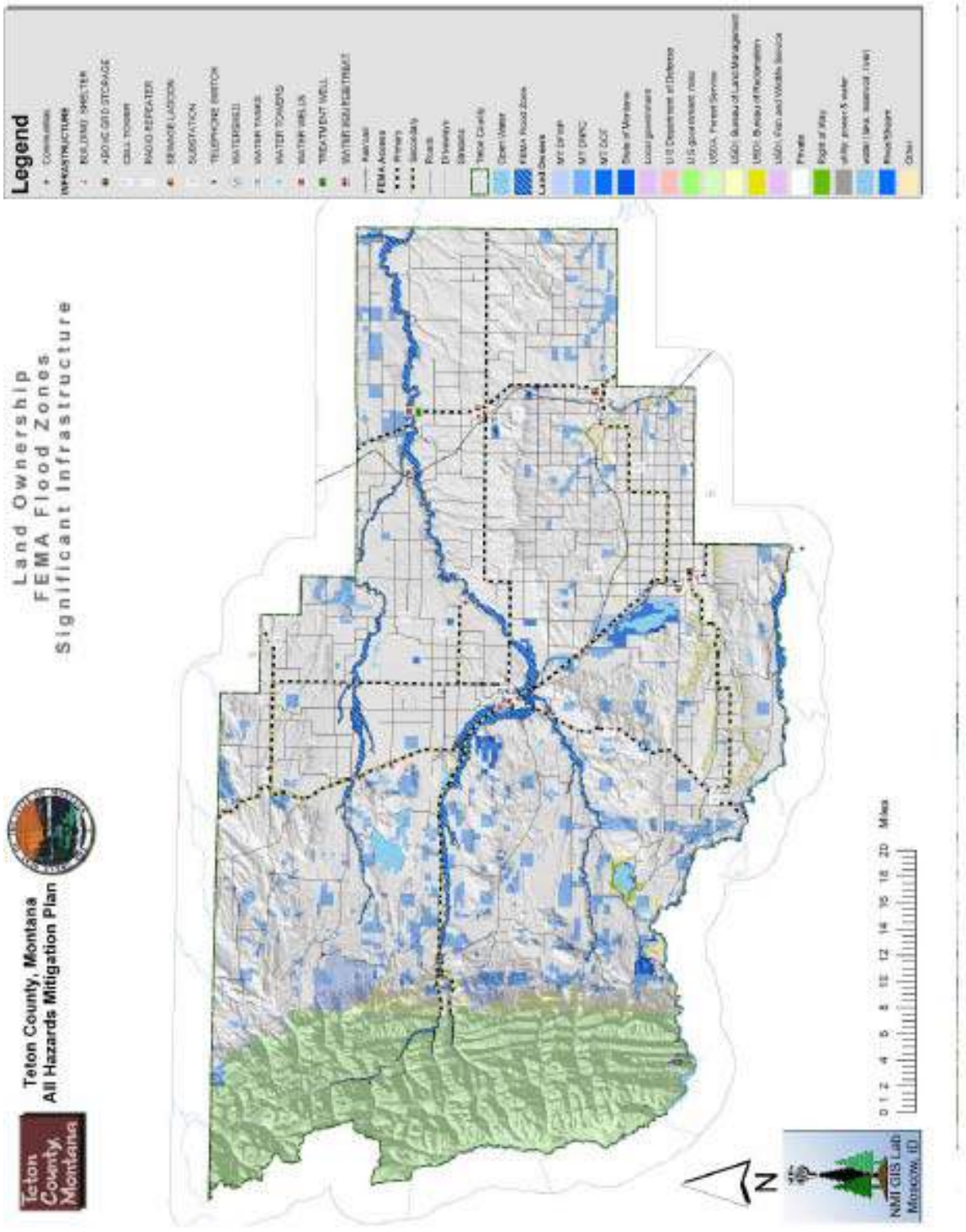
For purposes of floodplain management, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has adopted the 100-year flood as the base flood standard. The 500-year flood indicates additional areas of flood risk in the community. The 100-year flood is divided into floodway and a floodway fringe. The floodway is the channel of a stream plus any adjacent flood plain areas that must be kept free of encroachment. The floodway fringe encompasses the area of the floodplain that could be obstructed without substantial increase to the water surface elevation.

The flood plains of the Teton River and Spring Creek occupy vast amounts of the Teton Valley surrounding Choteau. Overflow from the Teton River into Spring Creek causes added flood hazard to Choteau. The Choteau sewage lagoon is located within the 100-year floodway but has a high enough elevation to be protected from a 100-year flood. During a 100-year flood, shallow flooding will occur along Spring Creek in Choteau. During a 500-year flood, such as the 1964 flood, water overtops Main Avenue throughout Choteau. Whether this infrequent event is a result of the Teton River or Spring Creek flooding is difficult to assess. During the flood of 1964, water overtopped Gibson Dam on the North Fork of the Sun River.

The flood of 1964 was the largest flood in the recorded history of Teton County. A combination of heavy rains along the Continental Divide and rapid snowmelt caused widespread flooding of many watersheds in Teton and neighboring counties. Nine counties were declared a disaster area. Other major flood events that have resulted in federal disaster declarations occurred in 1953, 1975, and 1986 Major floods occurred in 1956, 2002 and 2011, also, but were not severe enough to warrant federal disaster declarations for Teton County, although adjacent counties were declared disaster areas. (http://www.fema.gov/disasters/).

Some flood control measures include channel stabilization, bridge replacement, and preliminary surveys for structural flood control projects. Both the City of Choteau and Teton County have regulations that provide for flood plain management within their jurisdictional area.

Figure 10 : FEMA Flood Zones in Teton County



Note: For additional detail on properties within the floodlplain, see the Teton County Map page: https://tcmt.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html

7. Brownfields

A Brownfields site is "real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, controlled substances, petroleum or petroleum products, or is mine-scarred land.". Programs to address brownfield sites include:

- MT DEQ Petro Fund - The Petroleum Brownfields Program possesses unique requirements and receives specific funding to address "petroleum-only" Brownfields sites – sites where the sole contaminant is petroleum. There are three sites in Choteau that are part of the Petro Fund program.

- Leaking Underground Storage Tanks - The goal of the Petroleum Tank Cleanup Section is to protect human health and the environment from petroleum and hazardous substance releases from storage tank systems, both underground and above ground.

- EPA Assessment Grants - Brownfields Assessment Grants provide funding for developing and prioritizing inventories of Brownfields sites, conducting community involvement activities, and conducting site assessments and cleanup planning related to Brownfields sites. Sweetgrass Development Corporation for two brownfields assessment grants to conduct cleanup planning and community outreach activities in Cascade, Glacier, Pondera, Teton, and Toole Counties.

- EPA Grants & Loans - Brownfields Cleanup Grants are used for cleanup activities at specific Brownfields sites owned by the applicant. Revolving Lund Fund provide funding to conduct cleanup activities at Brownfields eligible sites, typically in the form of low-interest loans or subgrants.

- CERCLA – EPA regulates facilities that deal with hazardous substances including the - Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, (CERCLA) which monitors the Superfund Sites. There are no CERCLA sites in the county.

- Hazardous Materials – A release or spill of bulk hazardous materials could result in fire, explosion, toxic cloud or direct contamination of people and property. Response sites are locations that represent unpermitted releases of hazardous materials, The DEQ's Site Response Section facilitates the investigation and clean up of the sites. DEQ also registers statewide locations of businesses or entities that are hazardous waste handlers.

Table 10: Brownfield – Hazardous Waste Sites in Teton County

	Underground Tanks	Petro Fund	Response Sites	Hazardous Waste Handlers
Choteau	5	3	0	1
Fairfield	11	4	2	0
Dutton	16	5	0	0
Unincorporated	0	4	4	3
Total	32	16	6	4

Source: Montana Department of Environmental Quality, http://svc.mt.gov/deq/wmadst/#

Ear Mountain

NATURAL RESOURCES

KEY FINDINGS

Teton County offers a diverse landscape from plains to mountains. This landscape results in rich wildlife and habitat resources with stunning scenic views throughout the area. While the County has excellent air quality and few natural hazards, water quality and water rights in the two major watersheds are issues. There are numerous Federal, State, and local agencies involved in managing the various aspects of natural resources. Co-ordination among these agencies is crucial to establishing successful policies. Following are the key issues:

- Teton County has a semi-arid climate and only infrequently experiences extreme heat or cold throughout the year.
- The Department of Environmental Quality has listed both the Teton and Sun Rivers as impaired waterbodies. Watershed groups for both rivers have been instrumental in preparing and implementing Total Daily Maximum Load water quality plans.
- Since aquifers are primarily located in the western part of Teton County, land owners have more of an ability to drill a well than in the eastern part of the county.
- Water users relying on the Burton Bench Aquifer in the Farmington area may have concerns on the effect of future development on the water table.
- There are extensive irrigation improvements throughout the County that provide irrigation to over 125,000 acres in the County. Greenfield Irrigation District, a Bureau of Reclamation project, is the largest irrigator in the County.
- Mass movement of rock and soil is a potential hazard along transitional zones between benches and lowlands and along streambanks.
- Oil and gas production in Teton County has remained steady over the last four years at generally low levels of production.

- There are ample sand and gravel deposits but it has not been economically feasible for commercial mining of other mineral deposits.
- Air quality is generally excellent with the major concern being occasional high dust levels from gravel roads and cropland due to high winds and seasonal haze from forest fires or burning of agricultural fields.
- Teton County has a diverse landscape to support a wide range of wildlife. A number of public lands and private preserves provide protected habitat for this wildlife.
- The Lewis and Clark National Forest has a significant economic and quality of life impact on the County. The Forest Plan is scheduled to be updated in the next two to three years.
- The Rocky Mountain Heritage Act was passed in 2013 and includes provisions for conservation management areas.

CLIMATE

The climate in Teton County is generally the “continental” type with four distinct seasons. Although a few times each year winters may be subject to bitter cold air from the Arctic, these cold spells are generally brief and frequently interrupted by “Chinook” winds that produce warming trends with dramatic increases in temperatures in a short period of time. The winds are often gale force that remove snow and produce relatively clear, sunny winter weather. The lower elevations in the County will have average highs from 30 to 40 degrees in the coldest months of January and February.

Summer daytime temperatures in the plains average in the low 80’s in July and August with only rare occasions of extreme heat near the 100 degree mark. Nightime cooling occurs most summer days with low temperatures ranging from 45-50 degrees. Humidity in the summer is low. The growing season, defined as frost free days, averages 131 days per year and generally spans from the middle of May to the middle of September.

Due to the mountains, precipitation varies considerably from the higher to lower elevations. On the plains precipitation averages 11-12 inches per year with most of the rain falling during the growing season from April to September. May and June are the wettest months while less than an inch of precipitation is normal during the entire winter months. At Gibson Dam average precipitation is 18 inches. Snowpack in the higher mountain elevations is substantial and is critical for spring run-off that replenishes streams and reservoirs.

VEGETATION AND WEEDS

Teton County is approximately 1.4 million acres of rangeland, farmland, and forest along with several small towns and reservoirs. Soils in the County are able to support vegetation ranging from short and mid grasses and shrubs in most areas, to aspen, lodgepole pine, and Douglas-fir in the foothills and mountains. There are 32 plant species in Teton County. The number of endangered species are found primarily in the mountainous area in the western part of the County. Two rare orchid species are in Clary Coulee and the Muddy Creek drainage contains stands of old-growth spruce. Our Lake has three globally endangered plant species.

Weeds are a major concern. The main highway corridors in the County are also major corridors for the spread of weeds as are waterways such as Deep Creek and Muddy Creek. These corridors, combined with the Sun and the Teton Rivers, contain a large portion of the weed problems in Teton County. The network of irrigation ditches is another source of weed movement throughout the area. The 23 noxious weeds on the Montana state list are non-native invaders with no natural mechanisms of control. These weeds propagate quickly and are very competitive. Canadian Thistle is the number one invader in Teton County followed by Spotted Knapweed Leafy Spurge, Russian Knapweed, and Dalmatian Toadflax. These weeds are all difficult to eradicate because of a very extensive root system. Spotted Knapweed is the exception, but spreads very quickly due to its ability to produce an enormous amount of seed. Noxious weeds threaten rangelands, croplands, and recreation lands equally. Watershed groups on the Sun and Teton rivers control noxious weeds along these two corridors. Montana Department of Transportation and Teton County Weed District work together to control Noxious Weeds on Highway and secondary road right-of-ways. Irrigation Districts work to control weeds on their ditches. Federal and State agencies are active land managers that have Weed Management Plans in place with control, prevention, and eradication of weeds as their goals.

WATERSHEDS

The watershed is the total area drained by a river and its tributaries. There are two watersheds that cover most of Teton County.

1. Sun River Watershed

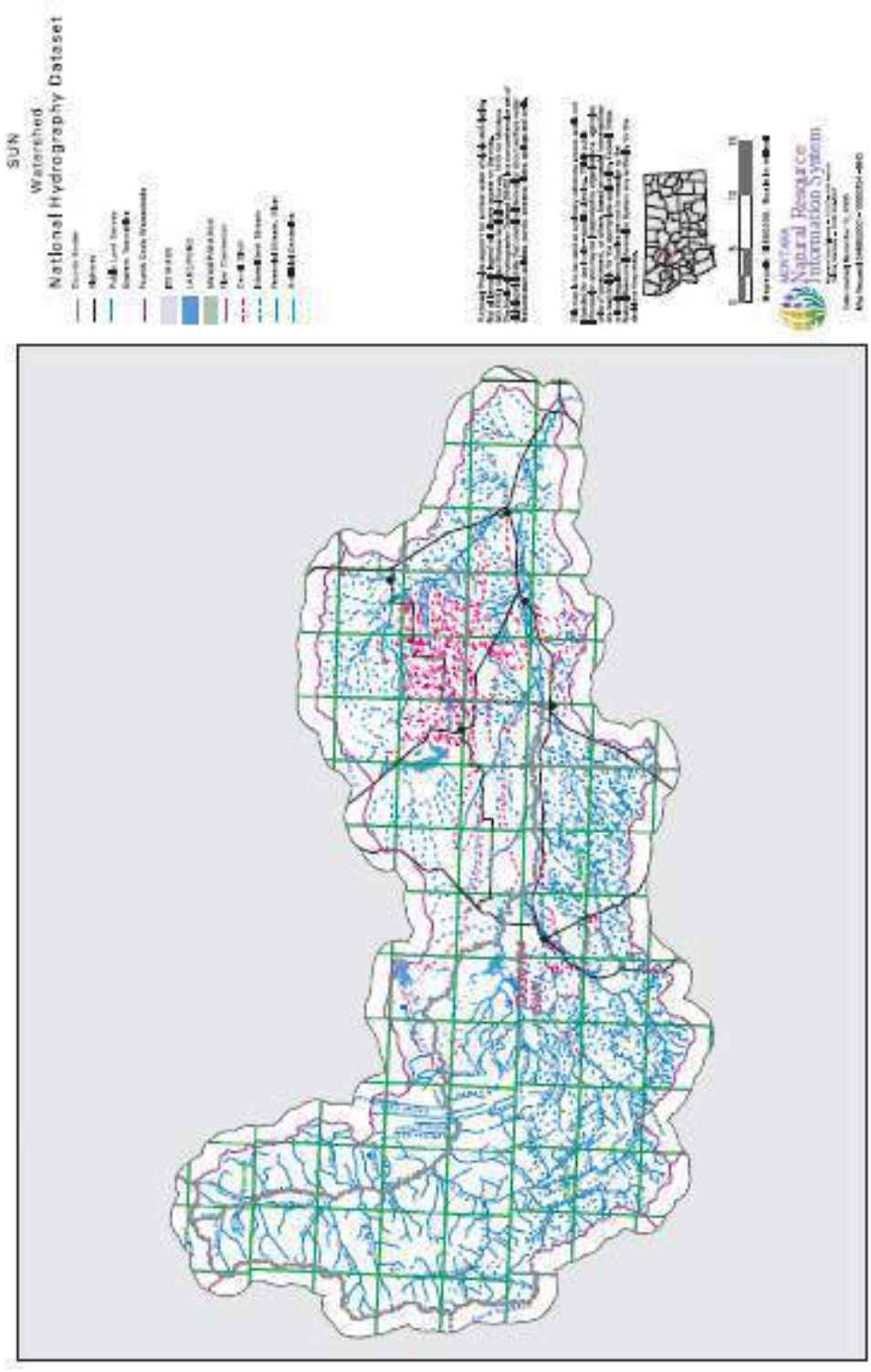
The Sun River is a tributary of the Missouri River in north-central Montana. The Sun River watershed encompasses approximately 2,200 square miles and flows through parts of Cascade, Lewis & Clark, and Teton counties. The river flows approximately 97.4 miles east, from an elevation of 9,000 feet (ft) along the Continental Divide to approximately 3,350 ft at its confluence with the Missouri River near Great Falls, Montana. The major land uses in the Sun River watershed include livestock grazing, crop production, forestlands, urban and rural residential, and wildlife habitat. The Sun River watershed is connected to the Teton River watershed via man-made canals and irrigation works. The development of each of Sun River Watershed and Teton Watershed TMDL plans were coordinated since water quality in the Teton River basin is intricately linked to actions in the Sun River basin due to irrigation water and eventually flowing to the Teton River.

The Sun River Watershed effort began with the formation of the Muddy Creek Task Force in 1992, which was formed to resolve major erosion problems along Muddy Creek. During this time, other efforts in the area had also been initiated to address related issues of water quantity and quality, including; Fort Shaw Irrigation District (water quality), Greenfields Irrigation District (water conservation), and Elk Creek (stream restoration efforts). The TMDL process was a collaborative to address common issues in a more effective manner. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality coordinated with these efforts and completed the Sun River TMDL in 2004.

The potentially impaired waters in the Sun River watershed as identified by the State of Montana 303(d) lists, Ford Creek, Gibson Reservoir, Willow Creek Reservoir, upper Sun River, lower Sun River, Freezout Lake, and Muddy Creek. Recommended strategies in the TMDL are intended to balance the varying uses of water while adhering to Montana's water quality and water use laws. Major strategies include:

- Restore in-stream flows to the Sun River through voluntarily action achieved through locally coordinated efforts and irrigation water management initiatives.
- Address salinity and selenium deposits in the Freezout Lake watershed through best management practices for irrigation and fallow cropping.
- Address salinity in Muddy Creek through best management practices for irrigation and priority for lands enrolled in the CRP acreage.
- Continue monitoring nutrient levels for Freezout Lake.
- Address nutrient loads on Muddy Creek/Sun River through agriculture practices such as addressing fertilizer use through management plans, erosion controls, fallow cropping BMPs, improved livestock grazing techniques and controlling run-off from animal feedlots.
- Address sedimentation and high water temperature in streams and rivers through grazing management, reducing irrigation water waste and riparian buffer zones.

Figure 1: Sun River Watershed



2. Teton River Watershed

The Teton watershed is located on the eastern side of the Rocky Mountain Front in west central Montana. Across the western third of the watershed Muddy Creek, the Teton River, and Deep Creek spill out onto the foothill prairie. The prairie landscape has much less relief than the mountain front but contains numerous buttes and low ridges. A dendritic, or branching, drainage pattern begins to form on the prairies once the streams leave the fault-controlled headwaters. The eastern two-thirds of the watershed is characterized by highly-dissected coulees and low river breaklands typical of the glaciated high plains in the western central Montana. The watersheds highest elevation is 9,400 feet along the continental divide and its lowest elevation is roughly 2,600 feet near the mouth at Loma.

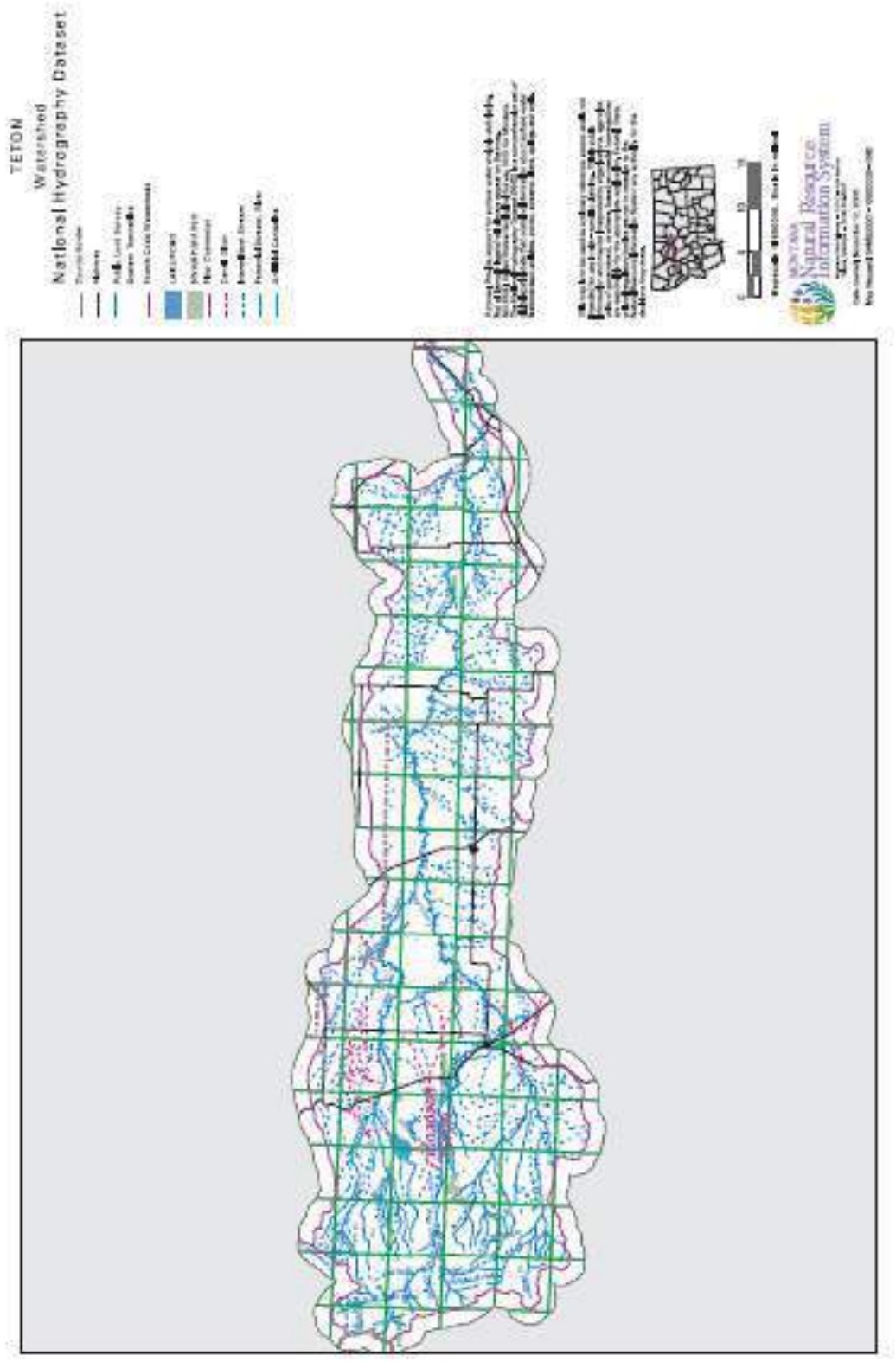
The most common concerns include flow and habitat alteration, siltation, and suspended solids. The dewatering of the Teton River on nearly an annual basis has been identified as a concern by a multi-county watershed-group. The Teton River Watershed Group leads the watershed effort with the support and guidance of the Teton and Chouteau Counties Conservation Districts. In the spring of 1994 land owners met to discuss resource concerns associated with the Teton River and adjacent lands, primarily focusing on water quality and quantity and weeds. Since then the group has undertaken a number of watershed restoration activities such as data gathering, assessments, testing, monitoring, stream stake stabilization projects, and weed control programs.

The DEQ listed the Teton River as an impaired waterbody and approved a 303(d) TMDL plan in 2003. The Plan was a cooperative effort of the State. The Teton River watershed is connected to the Sun River watershed via man-made canals and irrigation works. The development of each of these plans was done in close coordination since water quality in the Teton River basin is intricately linked to actions in the Sun River basin.

Most impairment listings across the watershed result from salinity, riparian degradation, stream channel instability (bank erosion and sedimentation), and flow alteration. Sources are varied, but predominantly result from the effects of the 1964 flood or relate to agricultural land uses and associated practices. The 1964 flood altered the course of the river channel in many places ultimately reducing the overall stream length roughly 35 miles and, in some cases, formed new channels through existing agricultural lands where riparian vegetation did not exist.

The plan recommends "Best Management Practices" for salinity and selenium to counter elevated shallow groundwater levels or that reduce the magnitude of groundwater flows. An adaptive management approach to monitoring will be used in the Teton River watershed. Adaptive management is a process that uses monitoring, research, and evaluation to determine results of land management changes and/or restoration activities. It monitors conditions and provides a basis for future review and revision of the TMDL.

Figure 2: Teton County Watershed



WATER QUALITY

Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act requires states to identify state waters where quality is impaired (does not fully meet standards) or threatened (is likely to violate standards in the near future). Every two years the states are required to submit a list of these impaired or threatened waters to the EPA. This "303(d) List" must prioritize the waterbodies in order to develop plans to bring the listed waters into compliance with water quality standards.

The primary use of the term Total Daily Maximum Load (TMDL) represents a plan (also called a water quality restoration plan) which has specific goals designed to achieve water quality standards. The other use of the term “TMDL” relates to the amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can assimilate and still meet water quality standards.

Point source pollution is from a discernible source such as a pipe, ditch, conduit, well, or other precise location. “Nonpoint sources” originate from diffuse runoff, seepage, drainage, or infiltration, and cannot be traced to a specific polluter. TMDL deals with both sources.

The Monitoring and Data Management Bureau (Bureau) of the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has responsibility under the Federal Clean Water Act and Montana Water Quality Act to monitor and assess the quality of Montana surface waters and to identify impaired or threatened stream segments and lakes. Under House Bill 546, DEQ sets TMDLs for each pollutant entering a body of water.

TMDLs describe the amount of each pollutant a waterbody can receive without violating water quality standards. DEQ considers future growth and development in establishing these limits and takes into account the pollution from all sources, including discharges from industrial plants and sewage treatment facilities, runoff from farms, forests and urban areas, and natural sources such as decaying organic matter or nutrients in soil.

DEQ works with wastewater dischargers, local conservation districts and watershed groups, and state and federal agencies to develop plans for threatened or impaired waterbodies or segments of waterbodies. For point source discharges, the waste load allocation of the TMDL are incorporated into a regulatory permit. For nonpoint sources, DEQ coordinates with local agencies and land owner/managers and provides technical assistance on implementing voluntary practices to achieve the water quality goals of the TMDL.

GROUNDWATER

1. Overview

Groundwater is that part of the rain or snow that infiltrates into the soil and rock to the water table. The unsaturated material above the water table contains air and rock and supports vegetation. In the saturated zone below the water table, ground water fills in the spaces between rocks and within bedrock fractures. Two characteristics of all rock that affect the presence and movement of groundwater are porosity and permeability. Unconsolidated material overlies bedrock and may consist of rock debris transported by glaciers or deposited by streams or lakes. This material can store ground water and yield groundwater to wells. Where the groundwater is stored and can readily transmit water to wells or springs, is an aquifer. Where water moves beneath a layer of clay or other dense, low permeability material, it is a confined aquifer. The pressure from the water will cause the water to flow from a well tapped into this source.

2. Aquifers in Teton County

Aquifers cover part of Teton County include 78 square miles in the Sun River watershed and 36 square miles in the Teton River watershed. The aquifers are generally in the western part of the County. Towns in the eastern part of the County, such as Dutton and Power, rely on surface water instead of wells while agricultural and residential uses in the eastern part of the county rely on the Tri-County & Tiber water districts to pump water to users.

The Montana Bureau of the Mines and Geology (MBMG) has conducted assessments of the aquifers on the Burton Bench (Farmington-Agawam-Bynum area), Teton Valley (Choteau area) and Fairfield area. The Burton Bench aquifer generally flows eastward following the topographic slope of the land. High water table in the recharge and discharge areas and deep water table in the middle storage zone characterizes the aquifer. Water level data for the study period did not show long-term trends for increasing or decreasing storage in the aquifers, but the MBMG study did indicate the following concern:

> "The use of leaky irrigation ditches and flood irrigation of fields for decades had lead to an artificially high water table in the Burton Bench aquifer. The high water table has enlarged the area of ground-water discharge east and north of Farmington by causing subirrigated fields and springs to occur. Drains have been dug, individuals have appropriated water from the springs and drains, and subirrigated lands have been utilized to grow grass for feed. These uses require specific water levels at or near altitudes at the present times. Any activity which lowers the altitude of the water table in the discharge zone of the aquifer can adversely affect these rights. If the water-level dependent water rights in the discharge part of the aquifer are respected, little new development which potentially could lower water levels in the discharge zone should be. If; however, the means of diversion for the water-level dependent rights are converted to those which are not so dependent on specific water levels, such additional development of the aquifer could occur."

The Teton Valley aquifer is between the City of Choteau and the Rocky Mountain front. The aquifer generally flows down-valleys parallel to the Teton River. Recharge to the aquifer occurs through subsurface flow and from leakage from the Teton River. Water levels fluctuate seasonally, but there are no long-term upward or downward trends. Potential contamination from wellheads in the Choteau area is the major concern.

3. Wells

The Montana Tech Groundwater Information Center maintains statistics on wells. The total number of wells in Teton County is 3,351. Of these, the majority are held by private individuals for domestic use with stockwater use being the second most common type of well. The number of domestic wells increased from 1,136 wells in 2002 to 1,412 wells in 2015 Public entities holding well water rights are the City of Choteau, Town of Fairfield, and the State of Montana.

Well depths vary by location and range from shallow depths of 10 feet or less to over 150 feet. The majority of wells are less than 50 feet in depth. In Teton County, wells that yield between 1 to 25 gallons per minute are the most common.

Table 1: Selected Well Use in Teton County

Use	**Number**
Domestic	1412
Stockwater	917
Monitoring	507
Irrigation	269
Public Water Supply	74
Unused	44
Unknown	32
GeoTech	26
Commercial/Industrial	19
Fire Protection	11

Source: Montana Tech, Groundwater Information Center, Well Statistics, 2015, http://mbmggwic.mtech.edu/

4. Water Quality

Ground-water quality concerns are hard water, a high concentration of salt or iron, sulfur, methane gas, petroleum or organic compounds, or bacteria. Some of these contaminants are naturally occurring and some are caused by human activities. Among potential threats to water quality are:

- Oil Spills- Leaking underground tanks.
- Methane gas – Occurs naturally. Wells need to be vented properly.
- Bacteria – Most common cause is septic-tank effluent.
- Barnyard runoff - Homes should be built upslope of barnyards.
- Pesticides & Fertilizers

Community water systems in Teton County have source water protection plans that are summarized in the public facilities chapter.

IRRIGATION

1. Sun River Project – US Bureau of Reclamation - Greenfields Irrigation District

The District is located north of the Sun River and extends from Highway 287 eastward to Muddy Creek. The project is comprised of the Greenfields Division with headquarters in Fairfield and the Fort Shaw Division with headquarters in Fort Shaw. The Sun River Project uses waters of the Sun River and tributaries that are stored in Gibson, Pishkun, and Willow Creek Reservoirs. The watershed above Gibson Dam is 596 square miles. Stream runoff from this drainage area mostly comes from rain and snow with some underground springs contributing to the water supply. Waters from the Sun River serve about 81,000 acres on the Greenfields Division. Landowners within the Greenfields District are assessed a per acreage fee on their property tax bill for water usage. Although there is the possibility of pumping water from the project to increase the area served, existing storage facilities limit this option.

The Sun River Project is comprised of the following improvements:

- Gibson Dam - The principal structure of the project and is 199 feet high with a base width of 177 feet.
- Gibson Reservoir - Has an active irrigation storage capacity of 105,000 acre feet
- Diversion Dam – Located 3 miles downstream from Gibson Dam. The water is diverted into the Piskun Supply Canal and the Willow Creek Feeder Canal.
- Willow Creek Reservoir – Located 15 miles southeast of Gibson Dam in Lewis & Clark County. Has a storage capacity of 32,400 acre-feet.
- Pishkun Reservoir – Located 15 miles northeast of Gibson Dam. Has a storage capacity of 46,300-acre square feet.
- Pishkun Supply Canal- 12 miles from Diversion Dam to Pishkun Reservoir.
- Willow Creek Feeder Canal – 7.5 miles from Diversion Dam to Willow Creek Reservoir.
- Sun River Slope Canal – 18 miles from Pishkun Reservoir to Fairfield
- Greenfields Main Canal - 25.4 miles from Fairfield northeast through Greenfields District
- Greenfields South Canal – 16.7 miles starting 2 miles south of Fairfield and running easterly
- Mill Coulee Canal – 10.7 miles long southeasterly from the Greenfields South Canal

2. Private Irrigation Systems

In addition to the Bureau of Reclamation project, there are a number of private irrigation companies within the County. These companies are generally owned by shareholders and operated by a Board of Directors.

♦ Bynum Irrigation District

The system includes the Bynum Reservoir with an average storage of 75,000 acre feet and a main 26 mile canal from the Reservoir to Muddy Creek. Water is diverted to the Reservoir from the Teton River. Delivery of water is from lateral canals diverting water at various points along the creek. The Bynum Irrigation District includes 20,538 acres being classified as irrigable lands.

♦ Eldorado Co-Operative Canal Company

The system consists of a diversion out of the Teton River with several branch laterals to supply water. The main canal flows northeasterly from the Teton River in Section 33 for a distance of 14.5 miles. Approximately 13,000 to 15,000 acres are irrigated from this system.

♦ Eureka/Teton Co-Operative Canal Company

Water is stored at Eureka Reservoir located about five miles southeast of Bynum Reservoir. The canal is 16 miles in length with approximately 15 miles of lateral ditches in the distribution system. Approximately 4,700 acres are irrigated from this system.

♦ Farmers Co-Operative Canal Company

The two storage reservoirs with this irrigation project are Harvey Lake (a natural lake) and Farmers Lake (constructed). These lakes are located just east of Bynum Reservoir. A feeder canal from the Teton River supplies water for both lakes. The main irrigation canal flows from the lower end of Farmers Lake and follows an easterly direction for 22 miles. Irrigated lands are located in the Farmington area and include from 5,000 to 7,000 acres.

♦ Brady Irrigation Company

The majority of irrigated land is in Pondera County but there is some limited land under irrigation in Teton County.

WATER RIGHTS

The Montana Water Use Act (Title 85, Chapter 2, MCA) of 1973 was an overhaul of water rights administration that contained the following major provisions.

1. Adjudication

All water rights existing prior to July 1, 1973, were to be finalized through a statewide adjudication process in state courts. There have been several deadlines over the years for claimants to file for rights that were established prior to 1973. Since all the claims cannot be adjudicated at once, claims are being decreed by basins for each of Montana's 85 drainage basins. The Teton River Basin and Sun River Basin have temporary preliminary decrees for water rights.

2. Permit System

A permit system was established for obtaining water rights for new or additional water developments. The permit system is administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). The DNRC also reviews changes to a permit. A person does not need to apply for a permit to develop a well or a groundwater spring with an anticipated use of 35 gallons per minute or less, not to exceed ten acre-feet per year. When a person combines an appropriation of two or more wells or developed springs from the same source and uses more than 35 gallons per minute or ten acre-feet per year a permit is required.

3. Preservation for Future Use

The Act provides for a system to reserve water for future uses and to maintain minimum instream flows for water quality, and fish and wildlife. These include:

- Controlled groundwater areas may be proposed by DNRC, by petition of a state or local public health agency, or by a petition signed by at least 20 or one-fourth, whichever is less, of groundwater. In general, a petition must demonstrate that either current or future groundwater withdrawals are in excess of the recharge to the aquifer, that there are disputes regarding rights, groundwater levels are declining, withdrawals will adversely affect groundwater quality or water quality within the groundwater, the area is not suited for a specific beneficial use. There are no controlled groundwater areas within Teton County.
- Montana has closed some of its river basins to certain types of new water appropriations due to water availability problems, over appropriation, and a concern for protecting existing water rights. The Teton River Basin is among the streams subject to legislative closure to certain new appropriations of water.

4) Record System

The 1973 Act established a centralized records system. Prior to 1973, water rights were recorded, but not consistently, in county courthouses throughout the state.

GEOLOGY

1. Geological History

The surface of Teton County is the result of geological activity that has continued for over four billion years. The oldest rocks in the County are more than 600 million years old and consist primarily of Precambrian Belt sedimentary rocks. Seas continuously flooded most of Montana during the Paleozoic Era that lasted from 600 to 225 million years ago, and also during the Mesozoic Era which lasted from 225 million years ago. This resulted in many more layers of sediment being deposited on top of the Precambrian sedimentary rocks.

The Rocky Mountains began forming approximately 135 million years ago. The region began breaking up into uplifted fault-blocks containing many combination rocks from previous eras. Teton County occupies a transitional zone between the Rocky Mountains and the Northern Great Plains. The mountains were formed after the Mesozoic era by a fault known as the “Northern Overthrust Belt”. They rise 2,000 to 4,000 feet above the gravel capped plateaus and are eroded into sharp barren peaks and serrated ridges. The mountains comprise a strip along the western border of the County approximately 10 to 12 miles wide and consist primarily of rock or shallow and poorly developed soils along the steeper slopes, with some soils along the streams and level areas that can support grass and other vegetation.

The intense geological activity continued on through the Tertiary Period until about 3 million years ago. During this time the climate was relatively dry and the valleys were filled with large amounts of sediment because of insufficient water to carry it out onto the plains. Since that time, a series of ice ages and increased rainfall during the inter-glacial periods resulted in sediment being spread across what is now the high plains of north-central Montana.

The eastern half of the County is characterized by these plains and consists primarily of Cretaceous sedimentary rock called Colorado Shale. This material was deposited 60 million years ago just prior to the draining of the last sea from Montana. As mentioned above, thick layers of gravel eroded from the mountains subsequently buried the Colorado shale. Since that time the landscape has been modified by continental glaciation and the continuing action of streams and rivers.

Currently geological activity includes the potential for the mass movement of earth and rock. Mass movement is the downslope movement of materials in response to gravity and can include rock fall, soil creep, earth flow, slumping, bedding plan failure, and debris slide or flow. Slumping or soil creep, the continuous slow downward movement of soil, is the most likely occurrence of mass movement in the County. Susceptible areas are along the transitional zone between benches and low lands and along streambanks where erosion on the outside curves of the creeks and rivers can gradually undercut the bank until it collapses. This is especially critical along Muddy Creek and portions of the Teton River.

2. Oil and Gas exploration

The Montana Board of Oil and Gas keeps records for active wells on public and private lands as well as the number of new well completions each year. Levels of oil production were above 100,000 bbls through the 1980s and early 1990's but production started to decline in 1992 and have remained in the 50,000 to 60,000 over the last 10-years. Natural gas production has also declined since the 1990's and has fluctuated between 300 mcf to 1,507 mcf over the past 10-years. .

Table 2: Oil and Gas production in Teton County

	Oil (bbls)	Natural Gas (mcf)
2005	52,790	530
2006	50,348	352
2007	51,535	1,507
2008	59,206	692
2009	62,186	681
2010	62,055	932
2011	58,540	892
2012	60,503	610
2013	60,427	317
2014	58,975	600

Source: Montana Board of Oil and Gas, http://bogc.dnrc.mt.gov/WebApps/DataMiner/

3. Minerals

The Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology maintains records on industrial mineral commodities that are either being mined in the State or have the potential to be mined. These records indicate deposits known as the Choteau titaniferous magnetite beds that comprise a narrow belt that bisects the County from the southeast to the northeast slightly west of Choteau. These beds contain iron and titanium-bearing sediments but do not have significant concentrations to be economically feasible for extraction.

Teton County also contains a portion of the Blackfoot-Valier Coal Field that begins in Cascade County and extends north to the Canadian border. Throughout the field the coal is thin, bony and sporadic in distribution. The coal is of high volatile bituminous rank but there has been no commercial mining operation in Teton County.

4. Paleontology Resources

Beginning in 1978, paleontologists began unearthing duck-billed dinosaurs and nests. The digs are located on the 18,000 Pine Butte Preserve. Since its discovery, Egg Mountain and Egg Island have yielded more than 500 dinosaur eggs, and is widely held to be one of the most active, productive, and important paleontological field in North America.

4. Gravel Deposits

Teton County is rich in gravel and sand deposits. The Department of Environmental Quality on-line database indicates over 50 open-cut scattered throughout the county as of July, 2015. Newer permits have a closure date for operation and a bond must be posted for private permits while the County and State must sign a release of liability. Operations are inspected before the bonds or liability wavier are released.

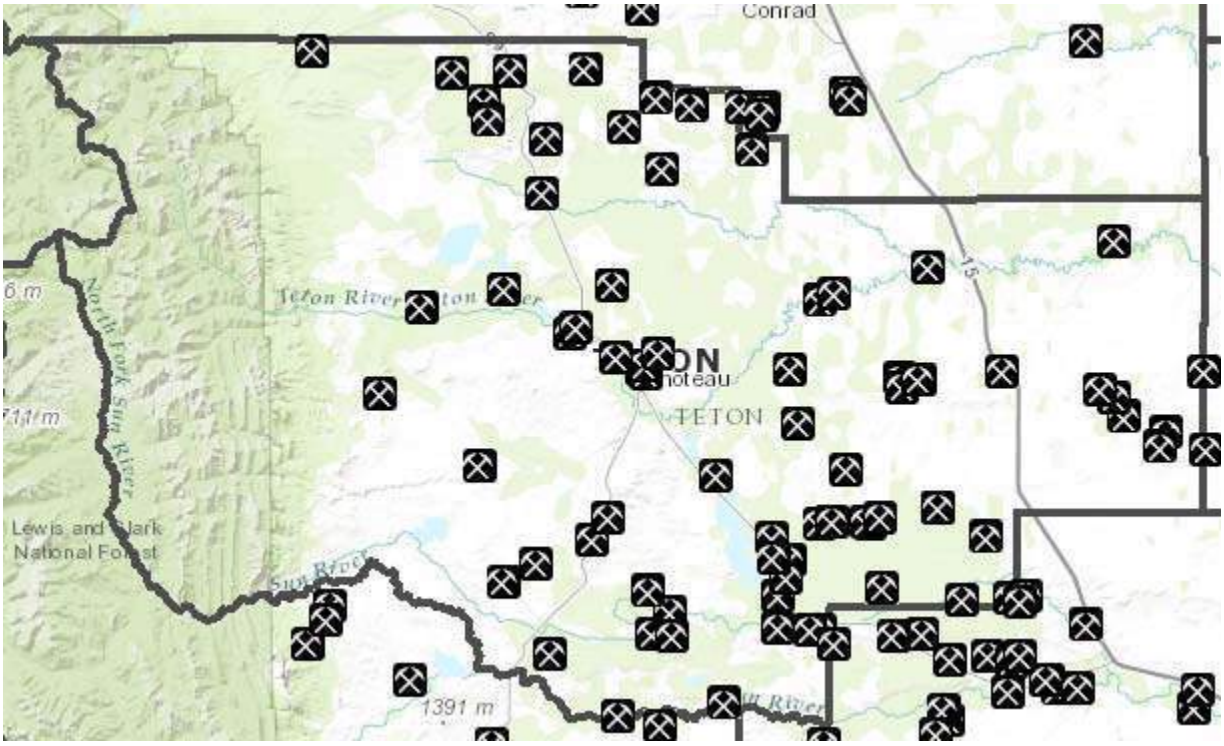
Sand and gravel are important natural resources found throughout Teton County. Sand and gravel resources provide the foundation upon which our infrastructure is built, defining where, how and to what extent development occurs. Our roads, bridges and highways are all constructed using gravel; the houses we live in, buildings we work in and sidewalks we walk on utilize the resource as well. Access to local gravel resources reduces costs associated with transportation and processing fees, thereby reducing the overall cost of development. The potential for local extraction of sand and gravel resources also affects the overall economic climate by providing jobs and serving local construction industries.

Developing an awareness of where sand and gravel resources are currently located and what types of activities (extraction, processing, and transportation) are occurring in these locations is important both to support growth and to avoid land use conflicts. In 2009, the Montana Code Annotated was amended to require communities to identify these resources in their Growth Policies. This information is intended to provide a base upon which future land use policies can be developed.

Although aggregate rock, such as sand and gravel, is an important construction and road maintenance resource for the County mining operations for sand and gravel can have environmental impacts and it is important to develop this resource without comprising the quality of the life in the County. Common issues with the locating of gravel quarries include:

- Traffic
- Noise
- Dust
- Water quality
- Restricting river, stream, and flood plain functions
- Visual buffers
- Impact on adjacent or nearby residential uses

Figure 3 : Open Cut Permits in Teton County



Source: Montana Department of Environmental Quality, http://svc.mt.gov/deq/wmadst/

SOILS

The Soil Conservation Service and engineers can assist in site specific soil surveys for proposed developments. This section provides a general overview of the types of soils found in Teton County. The soil type may present limitations that either need to be mitigated through planning and design or may even be so severe that certain uses are prohibitive. Following are the characteristics that may pose limitations on development.

- Shrink-swell potential
- Depth to seasonal high water table
- Flood hazard
- Steepness of slope
- Depth to bedrock
- Amount of stone
- Salinity or alkalinity
- Load-bearing capacities
- Frost heave potential
- Inherent erodibility
- Soil texture of surface
- Total acidity & soil resistivity and conductivity
- Soil permeability

In western Teton County, a band following the eastern edge of the Lewis and Clark Forest that is approximately 2 – 5 miles wide is characterized by, "Gently sloping to very steep, shallow to deep well-drained soils of the foothills and mountains." These soils have organic matter of duff on the surface one to two inches thick. Below this lies a thin layer of bleached material , followed by a block subsoil extending to a dept of one foot or more. The area was originally covered with conifer forest but a large portion has been logged or burned. The present cover consists of grass, pine, and an understory of brushy forbs and grass.

From the foothills to around Choteau, is a band of primarily, "Nearly level to Steep, shallow to deep, well drained soils of the shale and sandstone uplands". These soils are interspersed with the, "Nearly level to steep, deep, well-drained soils of the upland fans and terraces." Generally, the shallow and gravelly soils are likely to be more subject to drought than the developed upland soils because they generally do not have the capacity to store much moisture.

East of Choteau, there is a band of "Dominantly nearly level to moderately sloping, deep, well drained soils of the glaciofluvial and glaciolacustrine fans and terraces." These soils are generally developed under lower precipitation than the areas near the mountains and can be subject to drought unless irrigated.

The eastern half of the county is characterized by soils that are, "Dominantly nearly level to moderately steep, deep, well drained soils of the continental glacial till plains." In the southeast corner of the county, several square miles of clayey, salty soils occur, much of which is poorly drained. Some areas in the eastern part of the County contain soils that are adversely affected by absorbed sodium, which causes a dense impervious layer a few inches below the surface.

AIR QUALITY

"Teton County is located in the Montana Air Quality Control Region (AQCR) – 141, which comprises the north central part of Montana, a region of rolling glaciated plains. The Milk, Marias, Teton, and Missouri Rivers cut across the region from the west to east creating substantial river valleys that are hundreds of feet lower than the upland bench areas. Relatively small, isolated mountain ranges (Highwood, Bear Paw, and Little Rocky) rise up from the plains in the eastern half of the region. The western boundary of the region is formed by the Continental Divide and includes most of the area known as the Rocky Mountain Front. The foothills of the Big and Little Belt Mountains form the southern boundary along with the Missouri River. The eastern boundary cuts across the plains north of the Little Rocky Mountains to the Canadian border, which is the northern boundary of the region."

"With the exception of the isolated mountainous areas most of the region experiences a similar climatological regime with warm dry summers and cold dry winters interrupted by occasional chinooks. Dispersion potential in the region is generally excellent due to persistent and often very strong winds. Temperature inversions in the area, though frequent, are usually shallow and seldom last past noon. The exceptions to this rule are to be found in the mountainous areas and occasionally in the river valleys. "

"During the winter it is possible to have a warm wind blowing along a bench while cold air remains trapped in the bottom of a valley only a few miles away. Persistent inversions have also been noted in the narrow valleys of the Little Rocky Mountains. The wind flow over the region is generally from the west or southwest unless cold northerly winds are sweeping down from the arctic. Precipitation amounts are uniformly low over the entire region." *(Source: "Montana Air Monitoring – 1999 Network Review")*

Of the pollutants that the Environmental Protection agency monitors, only a few pose problems around the State and those are mostly limited to the larger cities in Montana. Particulate matter is the largest air pollution problem in the State. The most important factors contributing to this problem are a combination of meteorology and topography. Mountain valleys and frequent temperature inversions often lead to particulate being trapped close to their emission source for days at a time.

Of concern in Teton County are non-point area sources such as road and cropland dust. Extremely windy days increase dust levels from unpaved streets, especially in the gravel road system that is common in Teton County as well as the poorly protected dry cropland. Dust from cropland has been somewhat mitigated in recent years primarily due to programs such as the Conservation Resource Program. Additionally, wildfires in the region are becoming more frequent and more intense and consequently are creating hazardous and smoky conditions. Smoke from fires in our region can rapidly degrade air quality and are a public health concern.
http://dphhs.mt.gov/Portals/85/publichealth/ChronicDisease/Wildfire%20Public%20Health%20Messaging%20Toolkit.pdf & http://svc.mt.gov/deq/todaysair/

The Clean Air Act requires that the potential impact on Class I Areas be assessed as part of the permitting process. Class I Areas, as defined in the CAA, are national parks over 6,000 acres, national wilderness areas, and national memorial parks over 5,000 acres. Under this definition, the Bob Marshall Wilderness is a Class 1 Area. In addition to hazardous pollutants, the impacts to Class 1 Areas include visible plumes, regional haze, and acid deposition which must also be evaluated.

FISH & WILDLIFE

The majority of the central and eastern areas of the county are inhabited and agriculturally oriented. Consequently, the species of wildlife is limited primarily to deer, birds, fish, and grass plant species. The Rocky Mountain Front is recognized for exceptional wildlife values and supports a wide range of species including several endangered and threatened species. Some specific areas of wildlife importance include:

1. Lewis & Clark National Forest

The Lewis and Clark National Forest provides yearlong or seasonal habitat for 290 wildlife and fish species. Threatened species include grizzly bear and Canada lynx. Major big game and hunted species include elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat. One of the State's largest elk herds ranges in the upper drainages of the Sun River. White-tailed deer and black bear are other big-game species but provide limited amount of hunting. The major fishing streams in Teton County include the Sun River and Teton River. Important game fish include rainbow, cutthroat trout, brook trout, and mountain whitefish. Trout have been stocked in the more heavily fished streams to supplement the native fish populations.

2. Wildlife Areas

- Freezout Lake Wildlife Management Area

Freezout Lake is located on Highway 89 between Choteau and Fairfield. The area encompasses 12,000 square acres of interconnecting ponds and a series of ditches and dikes constructed to control water levels. Priest Lake lies seven miles to the north of the Freezout Lake headquarters and is also part of the management area. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) manages the area to provide wetland vegetation and agricultural crops that provide habitat for a variety of waterfowl and wildlife. The FWP has established cooperative agreements with private land owners adjacent to the area to enhance this area.

During winter months the area supports many species of hawks, owls, pheasants, mule and white-tailed deer, red fox, coyotes, and jackrabbits. During spring and fall waterfowl migration can result in up to a million waterfowl at the area including snow geese, tundra swans, egrets, white-faced ibis, sandhill cranes, bald and golden eagles, and gyrfalcons. Many species nest on the area. Fur-bearing species include muskrats, mink, raccoons, fox, and skunks.

- Blackleaf Wildlife Management Area

The Blackleaf Wildlife Management Area is located in the northwest part of the County and is bordered by the Blackleaf Road on the north. Muddy Creek and Antelope Butte are located within the area. There is County road access from U.S. Highway 89 at Bynum. Main roads are open year-round as weather permits. Montana FWP manages the 11,000 acre WMA that provides winter home to elk and year round habitat for a wide range of species including mountain goats, golden eagles, and falcons. The Blackleaf WMA is part of a network of refuges for elk that also includes Sun River WMA, Ear Mountain WMA, and Pine Butte Swamp. The area also provides public access to adjacent public lands and provides spring and summer habitat for black and grizzly bears.

♦ Ear Mountain Wildlife Management Area

Ear Mountain Wildlife Management Area is in western Teton County, 22 miles west of Choteau. Montana FWP manages the 3,047 acres WMA. The area provides wildlife habitat for mule deer, bighorn sheep, grizzly bears and black bears, and access to public lands along the Rocky Mountain Front. There is no vehicular access inside the WMA.

♦ Pine Butte Swamp Preserve

The Pine Butte Swamp is owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy. It is located northwest of Choteau just south of the Teton River Road and contains 18,000 acres. The preserve was established in 1978 and provides habitat for over 700 species of plants, 200 species of birds, and most native species including the plains grizzly bear.

3. Human –Wildlife Conflicts

Many species of wildlife can become attracted to development, especially residential development with its attendant garbage cans, bird feeders, and pet and livestock food bins. Developments that incorporate ecological principles and build with wildlife in mind are becoming more attractive to home buyers. Consideration of wildlife use and movement through a property should occur in the earliest planning stage, ideally before the proposal is even submitted to the local governing body for review. The Montana Subdivision and Platting Act require that impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat be taken into account in the local subdivision decision making process.

The most effective way to minimize adverse impacts on wildlife is to avoid them entirely by clustering development in more appropriate areas. Many of the principles for wildlife consideration are basic conservation practices that also have other environmental benefits. According to the National Science Foundation, “Building with Wildlife: A Guide to Conservation Oriented Development” major principles include:

- Maintain natural habitat patterns.
- Allow natural processes to continue.
- Enable wildlife movement between natural areas.
- Plan development according to the land’s capacity.
- Maintain key plants and animals.
- Minimize the extent of disturbance.

Many development techniques that have already been discussed in this element and are effective for protecting water quality and wetlands are also valuable in protecting wildlife habitat. Streamside setbacks provide areas for wildlife cover, movement, and access to water. The same is true of wetlands setbacks and the requirement for wetland buffers, as wetlands comprise some of the most valuable wildlife habitat in Montana. Restricting or prohibiting development on steep slopes can prevent the fragmenting of wildlife habitat and protect critical winter range. As discussed above, clustering and planned unit development options can also preserve valuable open spaces that wildlife use for migration, daily movement, winter range, and even calving.

D. Winter Range

Winter range serves the needs of animals that may migrate from hundreds of square miles from higher elevation “summer” ranges that are not habitable during the harsh winter months. Winter range also provides habitat for many species year round. When critical winter range is of poor quality, or reduced as a result of development or grazing, the result is a diminished capacity to support big game populations. The impact of any single subdivision proposal is typically small, but the cumulative effects of subdivisions over time can be significant if critical winter range is not incorporated into land use planning.

LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL FOREST

1. Overview

The Lewis and Clark National Forest encompasses the western edge of Teton County. The Lewis and Clark National Forest is comprised of two divisions. The Jefferson Division east of Great Falls includes the Little Belts, Highwoods, Snowy and Crazy Mountain Ranges. The Rocky Mountain Division spans Lewis and Clark, Teton, Pondera, and Glacier counties. It is bound on the west by the Continental Divide and Flathead National Forest and on the east by the Blackfeet Indian Reservation and State, BLM, and private lands. The Rocky Mountain Division includes major portions of the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat Wilderness areas. The Lewis and Clark Forest Office is located in Great Falls.

The National Forest land within the Lewis & Clark National Forest has been divided into 18 management areas, each with different goals, resource potential, and limitations. Following are the management areas in Teton County.

- Teton Geographic Unit

This area includes the North, South, Middle, and West Forks of the Teton River and Rocky, Old Baldy, Choteau, and Ear Mountains. The unit is southeast of the Bob Marshall Wilderness. Two roads from U.S. Highway 89 access the area. The unit contains narrow valleys, foothills, and steep reefs with forested slopes. The unit also contains range for bighorn sheep, grizzly bear, and mountain goat.

One guest ranch, the 7 Lazy P is in the unit in addition to some summer homes. Most oil and gas leases are in the area have been bought out or retired Exploration for oil and gas has taken place at various times in the past. Timber harvesting took place in the 1960's but currently is limited to firewood, posts, poles and houselogs being cut in the South and North Forks of the Teton drainages. Range allotments include parts of Deep Creek, Middle Fork Teton, Jones Creek and Chicken Coolee. Pastures are along the Jones Creek and West Fork. Other activities include fisheries, Teton Pass Ski Area, and cross-country ski trails.

- Deep Creek – Reservoir North Geographic Unit

This area is located entirely in Teton County and is bounded on the west by the Bob Marshall Wilderness, on the south by the Gibson Reservoir, the east by BLM and private land, and the north by National Forest lands. The area received primitive recreation use and has high wildlife value for grizzly bear, elk, mountain goat, bighorn sheep, mule dear, whitetailed deer, and black bear. Two roads constructed in 1960's for seismic exploration are closed to motorized use. The area also contains range allotments.

The area provides high value non-motorized recreation along its southwestern portion and along its northern boundary. Visitor use includes day hiking, horseback riding, camping, and hunting.

- Sun River Geographic Unit

This unit includes the Sun River Canyon, Gibson Dam, Reservoir, Lake and Diversion Dam. The unit ranges

from steep rock and scree slopes to gentle forested slopes. Range for bighorn sheep, mule deer, whitetail deer, and elk occur in this unit. A number of lodges and resorts are in the unit as well as summer homes. There are developed campgrounds and boat ramps at Mortimer Gulch and Home Gulch. The area around Gibson Reservoir is under the responsibility of both the Forest Service and Bureau of Reclamation. While oil and gas potential is high it is limited by slope and land type. There has been exploration activity at various times in the past. Timber was harvested in the 1920's and 1930's. Present harvest is limited to firewood and some small sales of posts, poles, and houselogs. There are limited grazing allotments.

2. Planning

The Forest Plan was issued in 1986. It provides the long-term direction for managing the Lewis and Clark National Forest. The Plan describes resource management practices, levels of resource production and management, and the availability and suitability of lands for resource management. The planning process considered several alternatives but the preferred alternative was as follows:

> "Alternative G would increase the use of forest resources, while providing diverse wildlife habitat and maintaining dispersed recreation opportunities in a semi-primitive setting."

Key Provisions:

- Timber harvest activities would be primarily in the Jefferson Division with some local needs provided in the Rocky Mountain Division.
- Arterial and collector road construction would decrease but local road construction would increase.
- Livestock grazing would increase where adverse impacts on wildlife habitat would be minimized.
- Wildlife habitat improvement would increase.
- Developed recreation would increase while retaining most semi-primitive recreation settings.
- Oil and gas leases would continue under no-surface occupancy, limited surface use activity coordination and time restrictions. (Amended in 1997)
- Recommends additions to the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat Wildernesses.

3. Gas and Oil Leases

Gas and oil leases were first approved on the Lewis and Clark National Forest in the late 1940's. These were located primarily in the Badger-Two Medicine drainages on the Rocky Mountain Division. During the 1950's, additional leases were issued covering nearly all the nonwilderness lands in the Division. In 1957, gas was discovered in Blackleaf Canyon, but was capped due to insufficient market conditions. This well was reopened in 1982. From 1968 to 1970 there was extensive exploration in the leased area.

From 1982 to 1997 leases were processed under guidelines that allowed for exploration but not production or field development until a decision on wilderness was made. Upon this decision, planning stipulations regarding timing restrictions, limited surface use and activity coordination would apply to the leases that went forward. In

1984, the Bob Marshall-Scapegoat-Great Bear Wilderness complex was withdrawn from mineral entry. In 1997, Forest Plan Amendment No. 21 amended the management direction as follows:

> "No lands on the Rocky Mountain Division will be offered for lease under the Selected Alternative. This alternative responds to public concern regarding oil and gas development on the Rocky Mountain Division. Included in the areas that would not be offered for lease is the RM-1 Geographic Unit (Badger-Two Medicine area) on the Rocky Mountain Division. Although some of the area is not currently leased, most of the area is already under lease and existing leases are under suspension. When the suspension is lifted, those leases will have from three to seven years remaining on their ten year lease term. In addition, final determination of boundaries for an identified traditional cultural district are still pending."

4. Rocky Mountain Heritage Act

The Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act of 2013 establishes the Rocky Mountain Front Conservation Management Area in Montana consisting of approximately 195,073 acres of federal land managed by Forest Service and 13,087 acres of federal land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The Act permits the Secretary of Agriculture with respect to Forest Service land or the Secretary of the Interior with respect to BLM land to only allow uses of the Conservation Management Area that would conserve, protect, and enhance the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations of the recreational, scenic, historical, cultural, fish, wildlife, roadless, and ecological values of the Area. The Act provides for the following:

- Sets forth provisions for the management of the Conservation Management Area regarding motorized vehicles and vegetation management projects.
- Permits grazing within the Conservation Management Area if it was established before enactment of this Act.
- Designates specified land within the Lewis and Clark National Forest in Montana as wilderness and adds the land to the National Wilderness Preservation System.
- Authorizes the concerned agencies to take necessary measures to control fires, insects, and diseases.
- Directs the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to prepare a comprehensive management strategy for the prevention, control, and eradication of noxious weeds in the Rocky Mountain Ranger District of the Lewis and Clark National Forest.
- Authorizes USDA to conduct a study for improving nonmotorized recreation trail opportunities, including mountain bicycling, on land within the District that is not designated as wilderness.

WETLANDS

Once, wetlands were considered wastelands that should be drained and filled. It is estimated that about one-fourth of Montana's wetlands have been lost to agriculture and urbanization. Today, wetlands are valued for providing wildlife habitat, improving water quality, recharging aquifers, and flood control.

1. Wetlands Defined

Government agencies have adopted a wetland definition developed jointly by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in "The Wetlands Delineation Manual of 1987":

> "Wetlands are those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas. "

The three types of wetlands in the County include:

- Palustrine – This is the most prevalent type of wetland in the County and generally refers to swamps or marshes. There are approximately 6,140 acres of this type of wetlands in the County.

- Riverine - These wetlands are associated with flowing water of rivers and streams. There are approximately 141 acres and 192 miles of this type of wetland in the county.

- Lacustrine – Associated with lakes and deep water holes. Examples are margins around mud flats, lakes, reservoirs, and ponds. There are only 3.3 acres of these types of wetlands in the county.

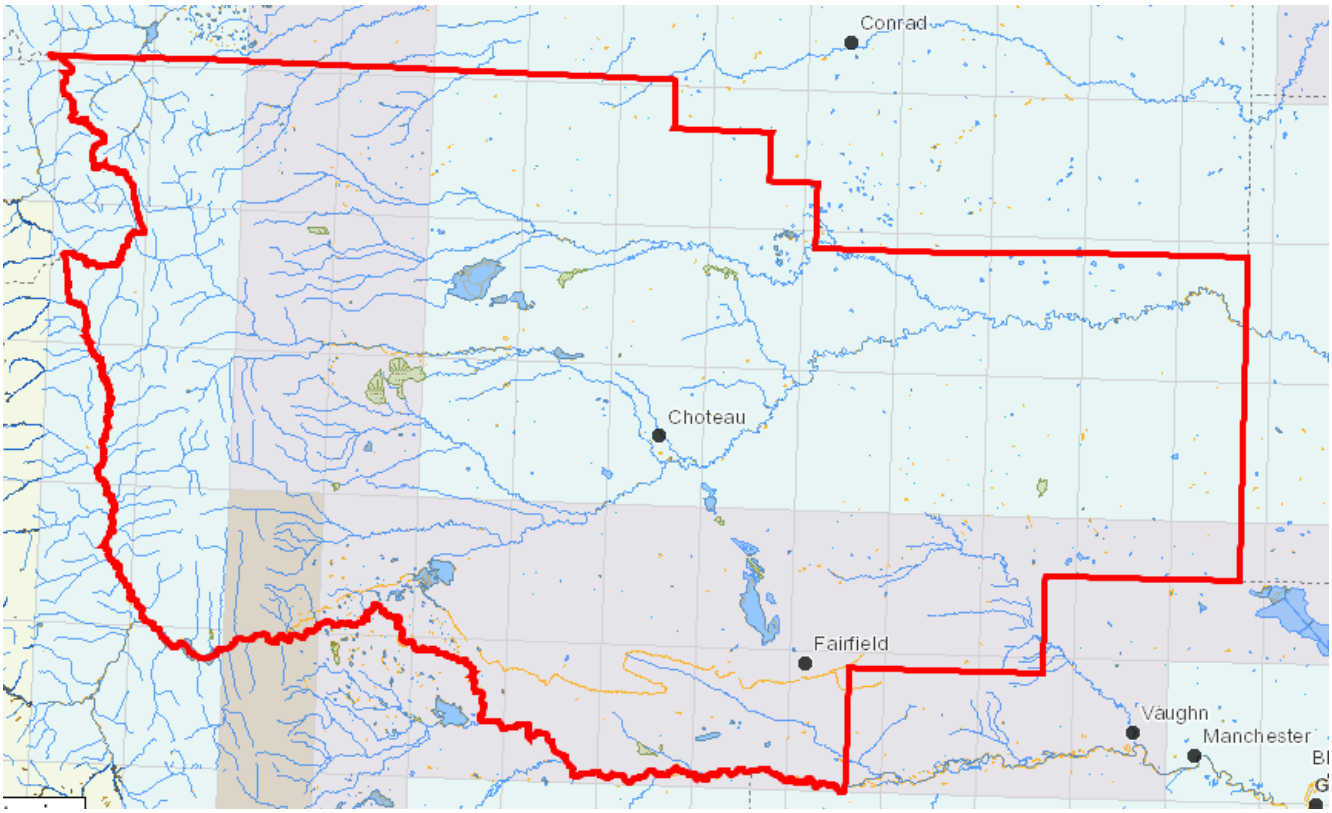
2. Wetland Regulations

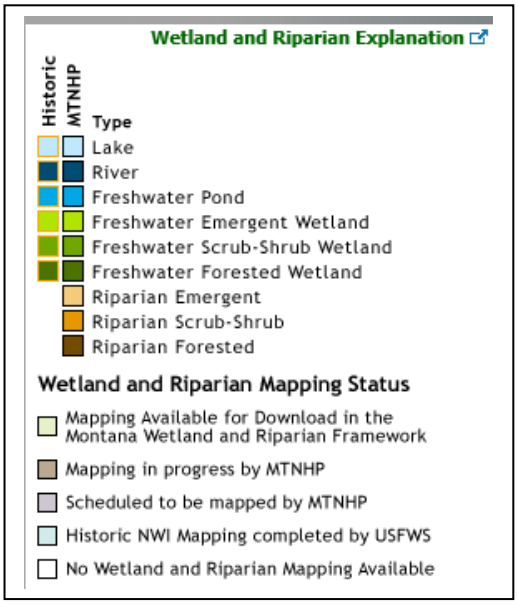
The Clean Water Act (CWA)1972 administered by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Army Corps of Engineers, and state agencies is the most common regulation that land owners will deal with regarding wetlands. Section 401 & 402 requires that states review and certify permits that may result in pollution discharges into surface waters and wetlands and established a permit system for this process. Section 404 jointly administered by the ACOE and EPA, governs dredging and filling of land. Additionally, the Montana Environmental Policy Act, Montana Administrative Rules, and the Endangered Species Act, also regulate activities that may affect wetlands. Creating artificial wetlands require a 404 permit and the acquisition of appropriate water rights.

5. Pine Butte Swamp Preserve

The preserve occurs along the Rocky Mountain front and encompasses land under various ownerships including The Nature Conservancy, private ranches, Bureau of Land Management and state lands. A large wetland complex comprised of pond, fen, carr and willow swamp vegetation is found along the north and west sides of the butte. The Teton River flows east along the north boundary of the Preserve. Water from the river flows south through glacial till and rises as numerous springs throughout the wetlands.

Figure 4 : Wetlands in Teton County





Source: Natural Heritage Map Viewer. Montana Natural Heritage Program. Retrieved on 7-31-15 from http://mtnhp.org/MapViewer/

PUBLIC FACILITIES

KEY FINDINGS

Public facilities include infrastructure such as roads, public water supply, wastewater treatment, and utilities. The capacity of these services indicates the area's ability to handle future growth. The current condition and needed upgrades are important to assess in order to set priorities for funding. Aging and obsolete facilities, safety, growth pressures, environmental concerns, and regulatory requirements are all issues that surround the operation and construction of public facilities. While the facilities located in the County are under the jurisdiction of various taxing districts and, in the case of utilities, private business, the County government still plays an important role in establishing policies that coordinate activities between agencies, facilitating the process for upgrades, and directing growth where there are adequate facilities.

- The primary transportation routes are under State jurisdiction. The majority of County roads are gravel and funds are limited to maintenance activities.
- Determining appropriate jurisdiction over public and private roads needs to be clarified and maintenance responsibilities clearly assigned.
- The water systems in each municipality have completed source water assessments that have identified potential risks and recommendations to protect drinking water.
- Water systems are dealing with water quality issues such as compliance with the Safe Water Drinking Act and wellhead protection. Wellhead protection and storm water management help address issues.
- Several of the wastewater systems in the county require significant improvements. Some facilities are at capacity and cannot handle additional users until these problems are addressed.
- The solid waste providers have adequate landfill capacity for their service areas. Solid waste disposal issues generally revolve around illegal dumping for those lacking access to solid waste roll-off sites.
- The area is well served by electric infrastructure with new programs for renewable energy and energy conservation. There are a several existing and proposed wind energy projects.
- Internet service in the area is slower than national and state averages and does not meet the current definition of broadband in most areas of the county.
- There is limited transit service. Many local streets lack pedestrian facilities.

TRANSPORTATION

1. City Streets

The incorporated municipalities maintain local streets within their City limits. The primary sources of funding for on-going maintenance are the general operating funds. Major improvement projects may be eligible for funding from the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). The major arterial streets in the city limits are generally state or county highways while residential streets are local city streets.

Table 1: Selected Statistics on City Streets

	Choteau	Fairfield	Dutton
Miles of Streets	26.331	6.25	7.3 (includes alleys)
Surface	Alleys = Gravel Streets = Paved (Some gravel will be paved)	Paved	Majority are paved
Storm Sewer	No Storm Sewers	Some Storm Sewers Primarily Open Drainage	No Storm Sewers CIP notes some street flooding & need for drainage plan.
Improvements	Maintenance & Paving	Maintenance Only	Maintenance Only

Source: Compiled from Interviews with the Towns of Choteau, Fairfield, & Dutton, October, 01

2. County Roads

The County Road and Bridge department is responsible for maintaining public roads and bridges in the unincorporated area that are not part of the state highway system. Private roads in residential developments that have not been improved to County standards and have not been dedicated as public right-of-way are the responsibility of the private landowners.

Currently, the County maintains 1460 miles of roads and 85 bridges. There is no capital improvement plan. The budget for roads contains funds for road maintenance, equipment, and personnel. There are no budgeted funds at this time for any major road improvements such as widening, reconstruction, or resurfacing. There is an ongoing program to replace selected bridges with culverts. Road and bridge maintenance funds come from the general fund, gas tax funds, grants and Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) funds from the Federal government for public lands.

Table 2: Selected Statistics on County Roads & Bridges

Miles of Road	1460
Miles of Paved Roads	30
Miles of Gravel Roads	1320
# of Bridges over 20 feet in length	35
# of Bridges 20 feet or less in length	50

Source: Teton County Road and Bridge Department

3. State & Federal Highways

The only north-south interstate corridor, I-15, extends for a stretch of 21 miles through the eastern portion of Teton County. The Interstate provides easy access to Great Falls, Montana for commuters, shoppers and those accessing regional services. It is also part of the trade corridor from Canada to Mexico that is becoming increasingly important to regional economic development.

US 89 and US 287 are part of the National Highway System and are classified as "Primary" highways. US 89 is a two-lane highway that extends throughout Montana providing access between Yellowstone National Park and Glacier National Park. The Towns of Fairfield, Choteau, and Bynum are along 48 miles of US 89 that stretches through Teton County. Traffic is heaviest on US 89 south of Fairfield and drops dramatically between Choteau and the north County line. US 287 extends south from Choteau providing access between Choteau and Augusta and beyond.

Highway 221 between Choteau and Dutton and Highway 220 between Choteau and Conrad are classified as "Secondary" highways and are maintained by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). Highway 408 that extends east-to-west between Fairfield, Highway 431 between Fairfield and Power, Highway 219 from Pendroy to Conrad, and Highway 379 from Dutton to the east county line are also "Secondary" highways.

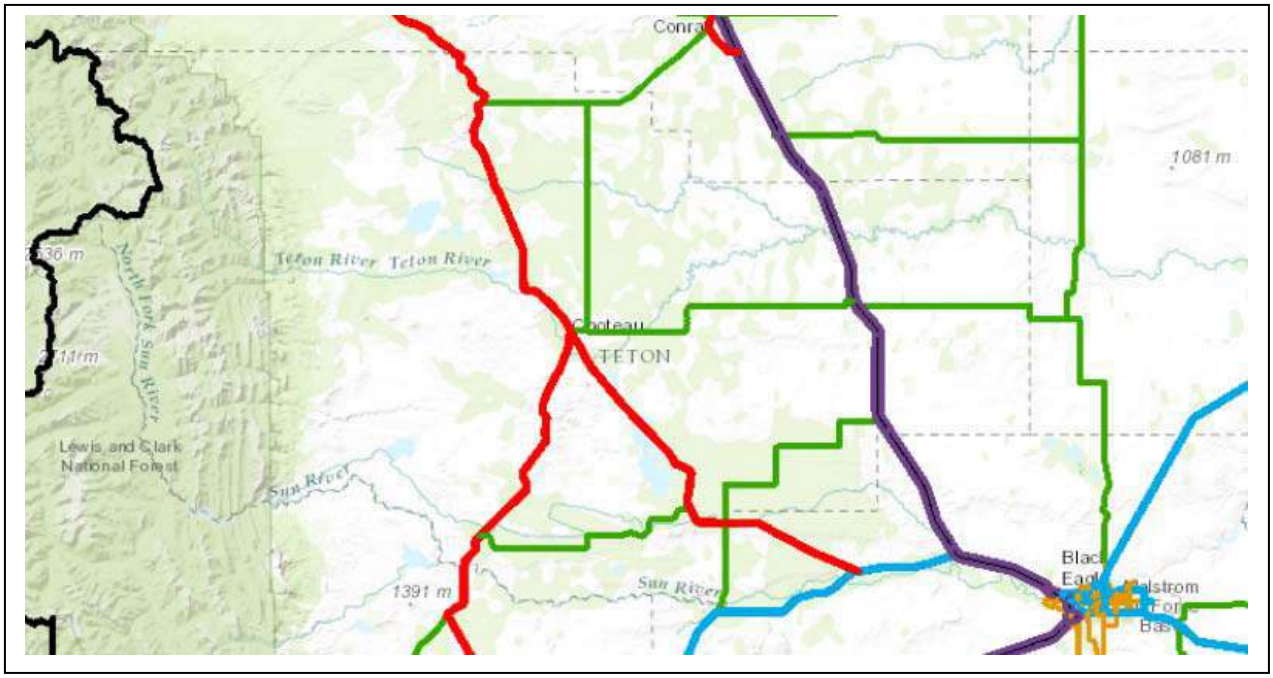
Table 3: Average Daily Traffic for Selected Road Segments in Teton County - 2014

Segment	**Total ADT**
US 89 south of Fairfield	2250
US 89 between Fairfield and Choteau	1670
US 89 between Choteau and Bynum	580
US 89 between Bynum and Pendroy	430
MT 220	390
MT 221 between Choteau and Dutton	250 – 280
MT 287 between Choteau and Augusta	520-570
MT 408 between Fairfield & Hwy 287	170 - 460

Source: Montana Department of Transportation,
http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/datastats/traffic_maps.shtml

Federal and State secondary highways are all eligible for Federal funds and are all within the jurisdiction of the MDT. The MDT prepares a 3 year Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) that allocates funding for road improvements. The State is divided into districts that conduct planning and oversee maintenance and construction for the District. Teton County is in District 3, Great Falls office. The STIPs for the period between 2015 and 2019 contains funds for 15 miles of reconstruction on Highway 89 and major rehab for Hwy 379 by Dutton.

Figure 1: Teton County – National Highway System



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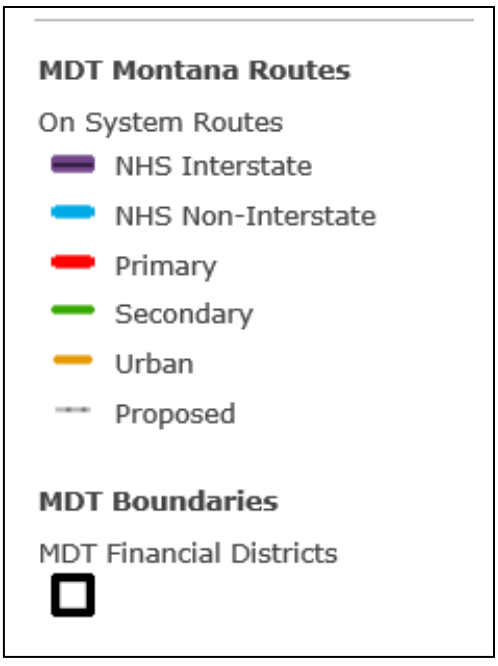


Source: *http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/map-gallery.shtml*

4. Traffic Safety

According to data from the Montana Department of Transportation, the number of traffic crashes in Teton County were at their lowest level in ten years for the year 2013.

Table 4: Crash Data for Teton County

Crash Severity	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Fatal	1	0	1	3	1	0	3	1	0	1
Serious Injury	6	5	8	6	5	5	2	8	5	4
Property Damage Only	82	90	93	77	81	75	85	57	58	48
Yearly Total	104	112	121	108	113	109	116	94	84	78

Source: http://www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/datastats/crashdata.shtml

The Montana Department of Transportation "Vision Zero" initiative has a goal to reduce injury and deaths on Montana Highways through education, engineering, enforcement and emergency response. Additionally, the Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: (SAFETEA-LU) has an increased focus on highway safety. The law established new resources and opportunities to advance highway safety in a comprehensive, strategic way. SAFETEA-LU requires each state to develop a Strategic Highway Safety Plan that provides state and local transportation and safety agencies a life-saving blueprint to address their top safety issues. Montana's Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (CHSP) meets this requirement.

MDT has developed a program to provide technical and financial assistance to communities for the development of a transportation safety plan that addresses the safety issues specific to their communities. The development of a Community Transportation Safety Plan is a community-led planning effort that brings together local safety partners to work together to address their safety issues. The planning process includes analysis of crash data to identify safety issues and review of best practices strategies to find solutions. The overall goal of the program is to reduce the number and severity of serious and fatal crashes within our communities for both vehicular traffic and pedestrians. In Teton County, there have been efforts to work with citizen groups to reduce safety through speed limits.

5. Air

There are three airports in Teton County located in Choteau, Fairfield, and Dutton. The County and each of the municipalities jointly operate the airports. An Airport Board, appointed by the County and cities, oversees operations at the airports. All airports are for general aviation with no commercial passenger service. The nearest passenger service is 30 miles south of the County in Great Falls. A helipad is located at Teton Medical Center in Choteau.

According to the Montana Department of Transportation, "Montana's Economic Impact of Airports Study", 2008, (http://www.mdt.mt.gov/aviation/economic-impact-study.shtml) the total economic output from all on-airport tenants and general aviation visitors was approximately $1.7 million annually.

Table 5: Airport Facilities in Teton County

	Choteau	**Fairfield**	**Dutton**
Runways	1 – Paved surface 75 ft x 500 ft 1 – Paved surface 60 ft x 3700 ft	1 – paved surface 40 ft x 3200 ft Turf runway – 90 ft x 1525 ft	1-paved surface 115 ft x 3130 ft (turf expands past pavement)
Services	Fuel, hangar storage, runways lighted, radio		Campbell Aviation sells fuel on prearranged basis. Lighted Runways

Source: Compiled from Interviews with Airport Board, Campbell Aviation, and Nitumbo Helicopters (October, 01)

6. Rail

The Burlington Northern Sante Fe (BNSF) Railroad operates the freight rail system in Teton County. There is no passenger service in Teton County. The closest Amtrak station is in Shelby about 35 miles north of Teton County. There are abandoned rail lines north of Choteau that previously provided service to the Farmington and Bynum areas. According to the Montana Department of Transportation, the following businesses are served by the railroad.

Table 6 : Rail Freight Facilities in Teton County

Name	**Location**	**Capacity**
Mountain View Coop	Collins	Shuttle Loading Facility, Capacity = 110 cars
Mountain View Coop	Dutton	52 – 75 Car Capacity
Miller – Coors	Power	52 - 75 Car Capacity
Busch Agricultural	Fairfield	52 – 75 Car Capacity
Treasure State Seed	Fairfield	Seed Dealer
Columbia Grain	Choteau	Car Capacity < 52

Source: Montana Department of Transportation, 2014

7. Alternative Transportation – Transit and Pedestrian Facilities

Public transit systems enable people to commute to and from work, shopping, recreation, and other destinations inexpensively, with the additional benefits of saving gas, reducing traffic, and lowering air pollution. As the population ages there will be more demand for transit services. Other than the private transit operated by the Senior Citizen Center, Skyline Lodge and Teton Medical Center for their constituents and residents, Teton County has no public transportation systems available.

The City of Choteau has a special improvement district for sidewalk improvements. A community group is constructing a recreational trail in Choteau. Fairfield and Dutton and the unincorporated communities often have limited sidewalks or other any pedestrian facilities.

COMMUNITY WATER FACILITIES

1. Town of Fairfield

- *Water Supply & Storage*

The Town of Fairfield currently obtains its water supply from eight wells with an average depth of 20 to 30 feet. The aquifer is limited, and the Town of Fairfield is located at its head, thereby limiting the quantity of water available from any single well. Combined pumping capacity when all eight wells were operational was an average of 100 g.p.m. Two elevated water tanks provide storage with storage capacities of 150,000 gallons and 60,000 gallons respectively.

Between January through May, the water table is low resulting in reduced well and pump capacity for the system during this period. In dry years, this has resulted in water restrictions on lawn watering. Once agriculture irrigation begins, the water table is replenished and the water level increases. The current storage capacity may handle additional growth and has adequate capacity for firefighting from January through May. In case of power failure, storage capacity is adequate for one day. The Town recently installed a back-up generator on one well to keep water flowing during these periods.

- *Water Quality*

There have been no lead or nitrate water quality violations since 2008. The Town's Capital Improvement Plan recommended a wellhead protection plan to prevent contamination of groundwater sources. This has been done. The city completed a source water assessment in 2004. The report identified potential contaminants from cultivated crop land, US and State highways, the railroad, golf course and trucking company; to date no contamination has occurred. Recommendations to manage risks include best management practices for agriculture, emergency preparedness for spills, and education on proper handling of hazardous waste.

- *Water Distribution System*

The distribution system was originally constructed in the 1940's with asbestos cement piping. The system consists of an eight-inch main with four-inch and six-inch branches. Although, the smaller four-inch mains in the north end of town have limitations on capacity and water pressure, all lines are now looped, creating adequate capacity and pressure.

- *Usage*

Fairfield has 364 water users that are comprised of primarily single-family residential users and with some commercial users. The entire system is now metered.

- *Upgrades*

The city has recently completed various improvements including updated mains, completely metering the system and telemetry.

2. City of Choteau

- *Water Supply and Storage*

The City water supply sources include the Water Works Well, Richem Lateral Collector, Stenson Upper Spring, and Stenson Lower Spring. The total capacity of these sources is 2.4 to 3.3 million gallons per day (gpd). All of these sources derive their water from the Teton Valley Aquifer and are located at the north and northwest end of the City. The City's two storage tanks are located on Airport Hill. There is a 250,000 gallon tank built in 1912 and a 500,000 gallon tank built in 1949. The tanks have been regularly cleaned and sealed. Even though the tanks are both older than the 50-year design life, both are in good condition and could continue in use with regularly scheduled rehabilitation and maintenance.

- *Water Quality*

The water supply is of high quality and requires no treatment other than the chlorination that has been ongoing since 1989. The City water system; however, does not possess an emergency "backup" water resource in the event of future contamination. All four water resources combine at the water works Well and Pump House. A 1994 "Wellhead Protection Plan" recommends three protection zones. The Water Plan recommends a fourth zone for the Upper Stenson Spring. The Plan also recommends that the Richem Lateral Collector be developed as an independent system as a backup to the main pump house. The city completed a source water assessment plan in 2001. The plan identified potential contaminants from underground storage tanks, sump pumps and highway spills. Recommended measures to address the risk include monitoring of wells and emergency planning.

- *Distribution System*

The City's distribution system is comprised of 4" to 12" mains with a total of 10.5 miles of water mains. The 4" pipe and 6" pipes could result in fire flow and pressure problems. A 4" pipe to the John Deere dealership is not adequate for additional development. The Water Plan recommends that these smaller pipes and any lead pipes should be replaced with a minimum 8" mains. There are very few dead-ends in the system. The approximately 100 fire hydrants have all been replaced with new models in the last 20 years. The network contains gate valves at most intersections that may be subject to leaking.

- *Water Usage*

The City water system currently serves 694 service connections. The most recent water facility plan indicated that leakage was a problem. The city has been upgrading to address these issues including the addition of meters.

- *Upgrades*

There are no planned improvements at this time but the city may need to extend service connections to lots on private wells.

3. Town of Dutton

- *Water Supply & Storage*

The source of the Town of Dutton's water supply is a 35-foot well located five miles northeast of Town along the Teton River. The water is pumped five and one-half miles to a storage tank located one mile south of town where the water is distributed via gravity flow. The storage tank has a capacity of 500,000 gallons. The tank was recently refurbished. The town relies on a single well.

- *Water Quality*

The water has a high mineral content that causes discoloration and odor, and a survey of water users' major concerns included this and the hardness of the water. Telemetry and a chlorination plant are in operation, and the Dutton water system currently meets the safe drinking water standards. Dutton has been involved in the development of the North Central Regional Water project and hopes to one day be hooked-up to this water supply.

- *Distribution System*

The distribution system includes two pumps feeding approximately 6 ½ miles of lines. The majority of town has 8-inch water lines. There is a ten-inch main from the storage tank to the railroad tracks where there is a hydrant to for fire protection for the grain elevators.

- *Usage*

The water system serves approximately 200 customers. Average daily water use is 76,411 gallons. The per capita water usage is below the national and state average. The well has never gone dry.

- *Upgrades*

A water improvement project was completed in 2015. The 500,000 gallon storage tank and chlorine vault were refurbished, all new valves were installed in Town, and a major section of transmission pipe was replaced.

4. North Central Montana Regional Water System

In 1997, the Montana Legislature ratified a water compact between the Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation and the State allocating water to the Tribe from Lake Elwell. Following approval of the compact, the Tribe, along with 22 participating water systems in Northcentral Montana, undertook a project to bring high quality, cost effective drinking water to the region.

The core system includes intake structure, treatment plant, and water distribution system to provide water from Lake Elwell to the residents of the Rocky Boy's Reservation. The non-core system of pipelines and other facilities provides water to the participating users. The system will serve approximately 10,000 households with an estimated population of 28,000.

In addition to addressing the need for drinking water that complies with the Safe Water Drinking Act, the system allows for a more efficient and manageable response to future regulatory changes. The regional water system will provide a reliable source of water that supports economic growth.

The Town of Dutton is a member of the Authority and would receive water from a 10" service line from Sweet Grass to Dutton. Eventually, this source of water would replace the existing well and address water quality problems. Tiber Water District which serves some families in northern Teton County is also a member of the Authority. The authority could also sell water to private entities such as owner associations and Hutterite Colonies in Teton County.

5. Power

- *Water Supply, Storage and Distribution System*

Power has a Water and Sewer District that operates the public water system for this unincorporated area of 161 people. Muddy Creek is the source for the water supply. Water is pumped from the creek at the treatment plant located 2 miles west of town and is chemically treated in a retention pond at the plant. It is then pumped to a 12,000 gallon storage tank for further treatment before being pumped to the 40,000 gallon storage tank in town. The distribution system consists of two-inch water mains throughout town. Due to the small size of the lines, water pressure is an issue. The lines are too small to serve fire hydrants; there are flush hydrants in town.

- *Water Usage*

There are 84 hook-ups on the system and all users are metered. The District charges $20 per month for the first 20,000 gallons of water and $0.10 per 100 gallons over the set rate.

- *Upgrades*

The system needs an additional filter at the treatment plant to accommodate any expansion. Cost is approximately $300,000. The current treatment system is at maximum capacity. Tank maintenance is needed. A source water assessment was completed in 2002. Potential sources of contamination are from the railroad and cultivated crop land. Emergency preparedness to handle any spills, remediation of release sites and best management practices on agricultural land were recommended to address these risks.

6. Tri-County Water District

- *Water Supply, Storage and Distribution*

The District operates two wells. Water is pumped 11 miles north to a storage tank on Teton Ridge. The system was built in 1981 and began operating in 1982. Storage tank capacity is 192,000 gallons or two days of water. The water is chlorinated and there is no filtering. The District maintains 215 miles of pipeline.

- *Water Usage*

Tri-County Water District serves a population of 460 people located in Teton, Cascade, and Choteau counties. The general area in the district spans from ten miles east of Choteau to approximately ten miles west of Floweree. The system was designed for 175 customers and is at capacity. No new users are being accepted to the District. Users are assessed a monthly fee and can draw up to 1440 gallons per day. The system is exclusively for domestic water and many users rely on cisterns instead of piped water. The system is not metered.

- *Upgrades*

To accommodate new growth the pipes would need to be resized and would not be cost effective. A source water assessment was completed in 2005. Potential contamination sources are from spills along Fifth Road and cultivated cropland. Recommendations to prevent contaminants in the system include emergency preparedness to handle spills, best management practices for agriculture and regular maintenance of septic systems.

7. Bynum – Teton County Water and Sewer District

Source water is from groundwater. The system has two wells. There are 29 residential service connections on the system serving a population of 65. The system is metered.

Source: http://sdwisdww.mt.gov:8080/DWW/index.jsp

8. Private Water Systems

In addition to the public water systems, there are a number of private community systems that are regulated by the State and EPA. Although some systems have had minor violations, no system is listed on the EPA's Significant Non-Compliance list. These systems are divided into three categories and are subject to different levels of compliance and permitting.

1) Community Water Systems are defined as systems that serve the same people year-round (e.g. in homes or businesses).

Table 7: Non Municipal Community Water Systems

Water System Name	Population Served	Primary Water Source Type
Miller Colony	130	Ground water
New Rockport Colony	88	Ground water
Rockport Colony	100	Ground water

2) Non-Transient Non-Community Water Systems: Water Systems that serve the same people, but not year-round (e.g. schools that have their own water system).

Table 8: Non Community Transient Water Systems serving the Same Population

Water System Name	Population Served	Primary Water Source Type
Bynum School District #12	50	Ground water
Golden Ridge School Dist 45	25	Ground water
Greenfield Elem School Dist 75	70	Ground water

3) Transient Non-Community Water Systems: Water Systems that do not consistently serve the same people (e.g. rest stops, campgrounds, gas stations).

Table 9: Non Community Transient Water Systems

Water System Name	Population Served	Primary Water Source Type
A & K Lanes	60	Ground water
Dutton Rest Stop	500	Ground water
Rose Room Bar	32	Ground water
Teton Pass DBA Choteau	200	Ground water
Pine Butte Rest Stop	30	Groundwater

Source: http://sdwisdww.mt.gov:8080/DWW/index.jsp

All water systems must comply with the EPA Safe Water Drinking Act. The act requires increasingly more stringent standards that may create difficulty for compliance with small community water systems. Additionally, the Act requires source protection for community water systems. Communities or districts must prepare well head protection plans and limit certain land use within a specified distance from the well head. A combination of permitting procedures through the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and land use regulations are used to enforce these restrictions. Montana Rural Water Systems, a non-profit agency with funding from Rural Development and EPA, provides technical assistance and training to administer these regulations for water systems.

WASTE WATER TREATMENT

1. City of Choteau

- *Treatment Plant*

The City of Choteau's wastewater is collected in a large, 27 acre, single cell wastewater stabilization pond located south of town. After natural biological treatment, effluent is either discharged to the Teton River (in the winter) or used for irrigation on alfalfa fields during the summer. The lagoon has the capacity to serve a population of 3,000 people.

The system does not meet current design standards for cell number, leakage, and process flexibility. Much of the system is deteriorating from age and in need of repair. The lagoon is not lined and the wetlands located around the system have indications of leakage from the lagoon. The hydraulic control and transfer structures are badly deteriorated. Sludge build-up is another problem. The lagoon system has generally met the discharge permit requirements.

- *Collection System*

The majority of the collection system is comprised of nine-inch vitrified clay pipe up to 70 years old. Television inspections indicated that many of the lines are in relatively good structural condition. The branch lines and collector lines have ample capacity for the areas they serve. The main interceptor lines have a capacity of 3.8 mgd total with the main trunk line having a capacity of 2.3 mgd. Field measurements indicated that flows sometimes exceed capacity.

- *Usage*

The wastewater system currently serves 1795 people with a projected growth rate of 0.5% annually. The City has a Sewer Use Ordinance that requires mandatory hook-up and prohibits discharge of deleterious materials in the system. The rate structure is based on a cost per unit. After water meters are installed, a rate system based on water usage may be preferable. According to the Sweet Grass Regional Impact Study, the system is at capacity.

- *Upgrades*

The City of Choteau has completed several projects between 2010 and 2014 to further reduce groundwater infiltration into sanitary sewer collection and treatment systems. In 2010 a ultraviolet disinfection system was also installed at the wastewater treatment lagoon to address a compliance mandate from the MT DEQ. A new mechanical treatment system will be completed in 2015-2016 to replace the existing single-cell facultative lagoon. The design population for the treatment facility is through the year 2036. The flows to the treatment system remain much higher than the City of population of approximately 1,700 people should have. Thus, ongoing efforts to eliminate infiltration occurring through broken sewer mains, leaking service line connections to the sewer mains, discharge of sump pumps, or other identified point sources should continue. Reduction in flows will have a corresponding reduction in the overall operations costs of the mechanical treatment facility.

2. Town of Fairfield

- *Treatment Plant*

The treatment plant consists of a single cell facultative lagoon. It is approximately 11 acres with an average depth of five feet. The lagoon was recently upgraded.

- *Collection System*

The existing collections system is comprised of approximately 25,000 feet of 8-inch, 10-inch, and 12-inch concrete mains. The main line runs south to north along 6th street. The outfall line to the lagoon is over 4,000 feet in length. The 1997 Facility Plan recommends replacement of the outfall line in order to reduce infiltration and inflow. The Plan estimates this would reduce flows by 600,000 gallons per day.

- *Usage*

There are 329 sewer users on the system. The Sweet Grass Regional Impact study indicated the system is close to capacity.

- *Upgrades*

In the fall of 2001, the Town Council voted to raise rates to build up a reserve for improvements. There is no timeline for the recommended upgrades. The potential for development south of Town near the golf course would require a lift station for sanitary service. A lift station would also be required if the area east of the town near the school wanted to convert from septic systems to municipal wastewater treatment. The town has submitted an application for grants for treatment facility upgrades.

3. Town of Dutton

- *Treatment Plant*

The treatment facility consists of a two-cell non-aerated lagoon system. The second cell is tested and drained once or twice a year from the second cell with the effluent discharged to the Dry Coulee Creek. Although the lagoon has adequate capacity for the service population, there is a significant accumulation of sludge in the first cell. This results in a rising water level on the dike.

- *Usage/Upgrades*

Waste water treatment plant, lift station and various collection improvements were recently completed with a 20-year design life.

4. Power

- *Treatment Plant*

The sewage treatment facility was constructed in 1985 and is located one-half mile northeast of Power. It consists of a two-cell total retention lagoon. There is no discharge from the facility. Each lagoon is approximately 5 acres in size and are oversized for the service population. One lagoon is not even in use. The lagoon that is being used is not full. It would be possible to construct a dike in this lagoon and create two cells. When the first cell has sludge build-up the second cell can be used to extend the life of the facility.

- *Collection System*

The collection system was installed in 1985 and reports no problems with infiltration.

- *Usage*

There are 84 hook-ups on the system. .

- *Upgrades*

There are no planned upgrades to the system.

5. Septic Systems

In the unincorporated areas, residents rely on private septic systems. The County Sanitarian permits all septic systems in the County. The County reviews all septic permits for any parcel over 20 acres. Both the County Sanitarian and the Department of Environmental Quality must review any development on less than 20 acres.

The soil types in the county generally do not place limitations on septic systems. Groundwater levels around Choteau and Fairfield; however, are shallow and this could create the potential of contamination of the water supply from septic systems. The County requires that no drainfield be located within 600 feet of a public water supply.

SOLID WASTE

1. North Montana Joint Refuse District

North Montana Joint Refuse District serves Teton, Pondera, and Glacier Counties. Members of the District are assessed for service through their tax bills. In Teton County, the City of Choteau belongs to the District. The City collects garbage and takes it to the roll-off site at the former landfill. Individuals can also dispose of waste at the roll-off site. Rubble, clean wood waste, and motor oil are also collected at the roll-off site in Choteau.

The District collects from the roll-off site and transports the waste to the District landfill located 12 miles north of Conrad on the Valier Highway. The landfill is classified as a Class 2 landfill and can accept construction debris and asbestos but does not accept any hazardous waste or liquids. The landfill accepts appliances and does recycle these products. The projected life for the landfill at current levels is 70 years. The City of Choteau accounts for 200 tons per month at the landfill. This amount has remained steady over the years and is not projected to increase. The landfill just purchased 160 acres and has 140 years of capacity.

2. Montana Waste

Montana Waste, located in Great Falls, offers collection and disposal services. It operates a Class 2 landfill in Great Falls and accepts household and commercial waste and accepts construction debris. The landfill accepts solid waste from ten counties.

The City of Fairfield contracts with Montana Waste for residential curbside and commercial pick-up. Residential customers pay $9 per month for once a week service. There are about 200 residential customers. Commercial service is also provided once a week. Additionally, Montana Waste collects waste at transfer container sites in Dutton and Power. The sites are picked-up on an as needed basis. In addition to these services, Montana Waste has some rural customers that contract individually for service including the Brady area.

3. Garbage Districts

There are two Refuse Districts in Teton County. Residents in these districts are assessed for services and can bring their waste to roll-off sites in the district. The roll-off sites are located in Dutton and Power. Montana Waste collects the waste at these sites. There are also burn sites for tree limbs and building materials that are located at the roll-off sites.

If a County resident is not located in a refuse district, they must contract individually for garbage service or have the option to join a district. New subdivisions must state how they are providing for solid waste disposal. Residents on land greater than five acres can dispose of waste on site. There is a problem, however, with some county residents disposing of waste at commercial dumpsters in Choteau and Fairfield.

4. Recycling

The City of Choteau of is very pro-active in its recycling efforts. The recycling center is located at the North end of the City Shop (22 2nd Street SE). We currently recycle cans, cardboard and mixed paper. The recycling center is open Tuesday and Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

ELECTRICITY & GAS

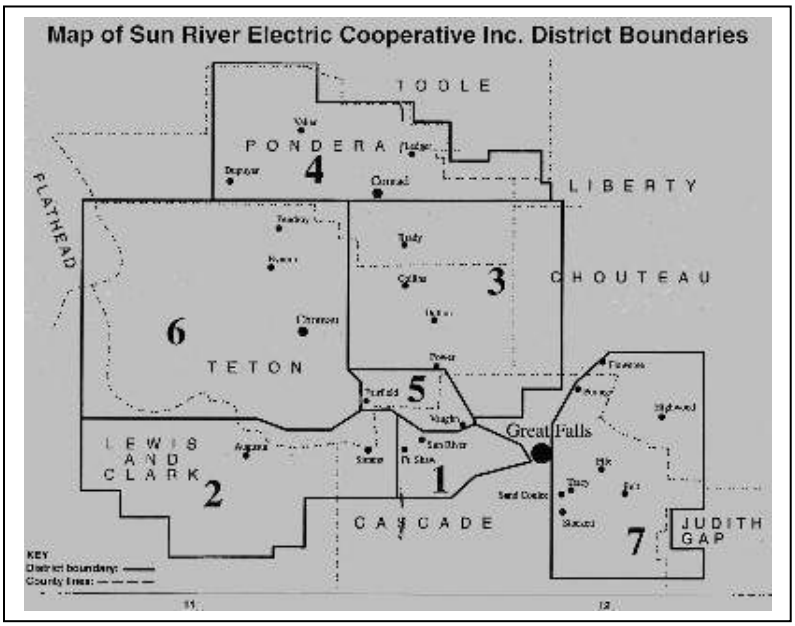
1. Northwest Energy

Northwest Energy is the electric and natural gas utility that serves the incorporated towns. The Northwest energy service territory covers approximately 107,600 square miles or 73% of Montana. This area includes 288,000 electric customers and 151,000 natural gas customers in the western two-thirds of Montana. Northwest Energy electric transmission system consists of over 7,000 miles of transmission lines and associated terminal facilities. The Northwest Energy system has interconnections to five major transmission systems located in the Western Systems Coordinating Council (WSCC) area, as well as one interconnection to a system that connects with the Mid-Continent Area Power Pool (MAPP) region. Northwest Energy also has programs for net metering, renewable energy and energy conservation.

2. Sun River Electric Cooperative

Sun River Electric Cooperative was first organized as Sun River Electrification in 1937. It opened its headquarters in Fairfield the following year and still operates at that location. The first electric service was installed in the Sun River Valley from Vaughn to Simms and north to the Fairfield Bench. Today Sun River Electric serves consumers in Cascade, Teton, Pondera, Lewis & Clark, Choteau, Liberty, Toole, and Judith Basin counties. In Teton County, Sun River serves all customers located outside the municipalities of Choteau, Fairfield, and Dutton. Sun River Electric currently has 22 employees.

Figure 2: Map of Sun River Electric Cooperative Inc. District Boundaries

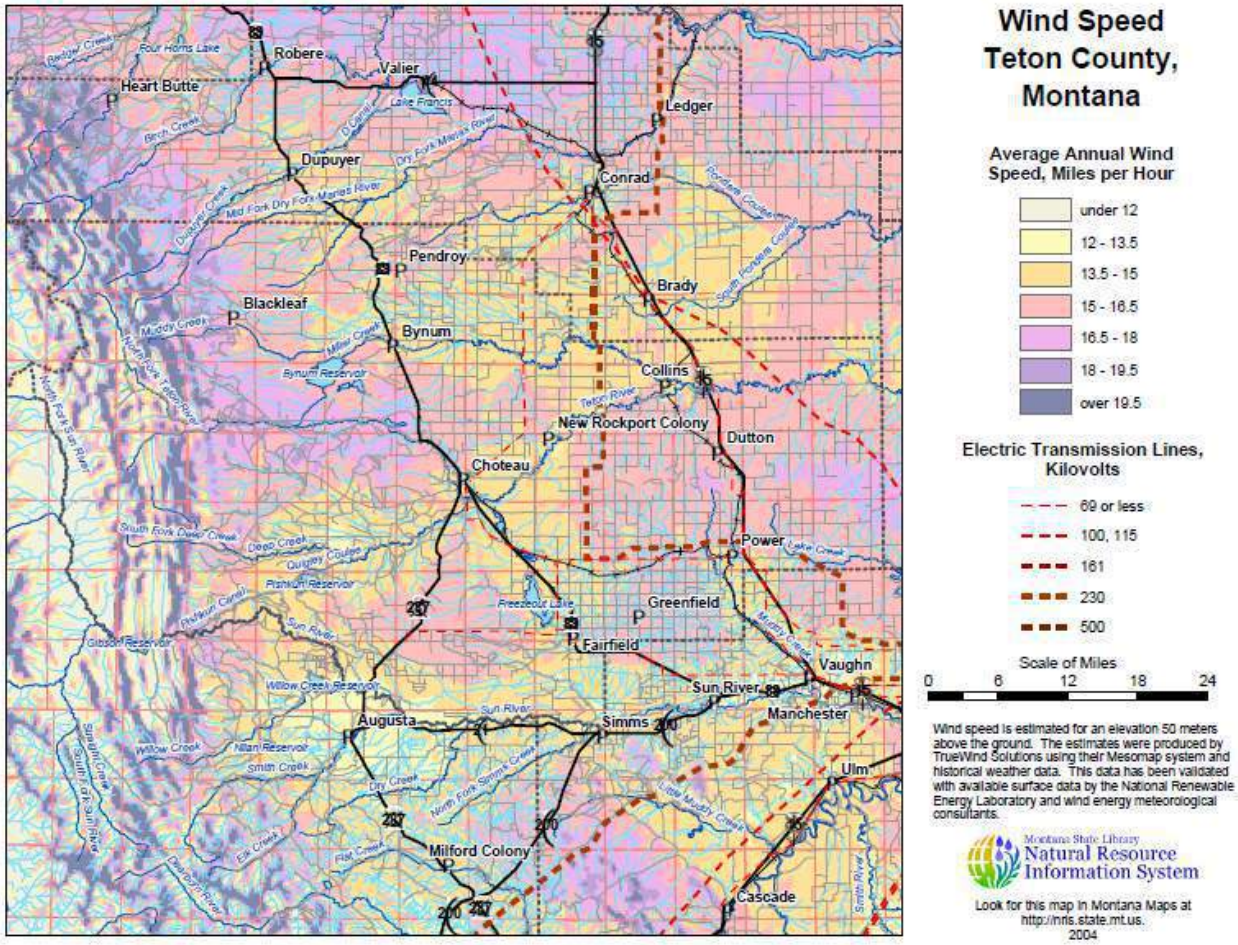


The Cooperative purchases power from Central Montana Electric Power Cooperative. This Cooperative, located in Great Falls, buys power from the Basin Electric Power Cooperative and Western Area Power Administration. Sun River Electric has a total of 5,700 meters with 2091 of those meters located in Teton County. As a group, residential members comprise the largest consumer class, though approximately 25% of sales are from irrigators. The Cooperative has experienced modest growth of 1.4% a year averaged over the past 10 years. In addition to electric services, the cooperative offers energy audits, net metering, weatherization and green energy options.

WIND ENERGY

Wind resources can be used with both large wind turbines for utility applications and with small wind turbines for on-site generation. As a renewable resource, wind is classified according to power classes, which are based on typical wind speeds. These classes range from class 1 (the lowest) to class 7 (the highest). In general, wind power class 3 or higher can be useful for generating wind power with large (utility-scale) turbines, and small turbines can be used at any wind speed. Class 4 and above are considered good resources. Most of Teton County is classified as Class 3 – "Fair", with parts of the county having good to excellent wind resources. There are wind energy projects north of Fairfield with six towers and approval is pending for the Greenfield Wind Project with 15 towers. Commercial wind farms are also located in the region in 0Cascade County and Toole County.

Figure : Wind Speed in Teton County



TELECOMMUNICATIONS

1. Telephone

The local telephone network consists of the switching offices, the interoffice backbone, and the local loop. The companies that own and operate the network are referred to as Local Exchange Carriers (LEC). In the study area Three Rivers Communications is the local exchange carrier that provides service to most of the County. CenturyLInk provides service to the Town of Dutton. Three Rivers provides service in Teton County and throughout Montana. Cellular Telephone Companies with licenses in all or parts of Teton County include AT&T wireless and Verizon.

2. Broadband

Telephone and broadband services in the County is provided by Three Rivers and wireless provider Verizon. In 2010, when the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted the National Broadband Plan, the definition of broadband was 4mbps download speed. In the FCC "2015 -Broadband Progress Report", the FCC adopted a new standard for broadband of 25mbps download speed. The FCC Broadband Plan calls for 100 mbps download speeds for homes and one gigabit speeds for anchor institutions by the year 2020. While download speeds are important for popular applications such as streaming video, businesses and telecommuters that are transferring large data files often have a need for higher upload speeds as well.

According to Table 10, most of the county is covered by DSL and wireless Internet technology. There is no cable Internet. The Fairfield area is served by fiber optic infrastructure. While, the Fairfield area has download and upload speeds that meet the current definition of broadband, the remainder of the county does not have services that do not meet the current broadband definition.

Table 10: % of population in service area with selected broadband services

	Teton County		**State**		**National**	
Type of Technology						
DSL	73.9		85.0%		90.0%	
Fiber	26.9		3.4%		25.4%	
Cable	0		68.3%		88.8%	
Wireless	95.6		96.6%		99.4%	
	Download	Upload	Download	Upload	Download	Upload
Wireline Speed						
>3mpbs	81.9%	26.9%	86.8%	17.7%	95.4%	86.0%
>10 mbps	31.1%	0%	78.9%	9.7%	92.9%	62.1%
>25 mbps	26.9%	0%	22.5%	1.6%	85.3%	27.5%
>100 mbps	0%	0%	1.6%	0.3%	64.8%	18.3%
Wireless Speed						
>3mpbs	93.2%	73.9%	95.1%	91.4%	99.3%	99.3%
>10 mbps	85.0%	0%	93.1%	0%	98.2%	16.6%

Source: National Broadband Map – 2014, http://www.broadbandmap.gov/summarize

LOCAL SERVICES

KEY FINDINGS

- There are three incorporated municipalities in Teton County – Choteau, Fairfield and Dutton. Choteau is the county seat.
- Compared to other counties of comparable size, Teton County has a lower mill levy for purposes of calculating property taxes.
- There are six rural volunteer fire districts and three municipal fire districts that are also staffed by volunteers. All districts participate in mutual aid agreements with the county. The primary responsibility for wildland fires on public land is with United States Forest Service and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.
- According to the Teton County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, areas located near areas with heavy fuel loads, on steep slopes, in areas with poor road access or areas with limited water supplies are at high risks for structure damage due to wildland fires.
- The Pre-disaster Mitigation Plan identified drought, flooding, earthquakes, HazMat incidents, landslides, sever weather and winter storms as potential hazards in the county.
- Law enforcement in the county is primarily provided by the County Sheriff's Office. The office is also responsible for 9-1-1, search and rescue, animal control, drug task force and burn permits. Crime rate in Teton County is lower than urban areas.
- There are three public libraries in the county located in Choteau, Fairfield and Dutton. Each library has its own library board with representatives appointed by both the towns and the county board. Libraries are becoming more reliant on Internet services and digital collections.
- All school districts, except for the Greenfield Elementary District has experienced a decline in enrollment over the last 10-years. Four districts had enrollments that declined by one-third between the years 2005 and 2015.
- Benefis Hospital in Great Falls operates Teton Medical Center, the only critical care hospital in the county.
- The County has higher rates of deaths from cancer and heart disease compared to the rest of the state. Public health officials are emphasizing lifestyle changes to prevent such illnesses.
- There is a shortage of dental health and primary health care professionals in the county.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government in Teton County consists of the County and the incorporated city of Choteau, and the towns of Dutton, and Fairfield.

1. Teton County

Teton County has a three-member Board of Commissioners, which is responsible for governing and guiding county operations. Commissioners oversee County departments including Road, Public Health, Public Assistance, Sanitarian, Disaster and Emergency Services, Planning, Weed Control, and Extension as well as other contract services. The Commissioners are responsible for producing the annual budget for Teton County. In 2013, Teton County employed 45 people in its various departments. The various offices of county government are described at the County's website at www.tetoncomt.org. Teton County has a number of boards and commissions including:

- Airport Commission
- City-County Board of Health
- Cemetery District
- Teton Conservation District
- Teton Council on Aging
- Local Drought Advisory Committee
- Teton County Planning Board
- Weed Board

Teton County owns a number of buildings and grounds including:

- County Courthouse
- Courthouse Annex
- Weed Barn
- 3 Ambulance Barns (one each in Choteau, Power, and Fairfield)
- Road Shops/Garage (in Choteau, Power, Dutton, Fairfield)
- Sheriff's Office
- Park in Bynum

The ANNEX building houses the offices of the Teton County Attorney, EMS and DES Coordinators, Planning and Rural Addressing Coordinator, County Sanitarian, and the Weed District Foreman.

2. Choteau

Choteau, with a population of 1,684 in the year 2010, is the County seat of Teton County. Choteau has a commission-executive form of government with four council members and a mayor. The city has nine full-time staff. Local services provided by the city include the maintenance and operation of two city parks, city pavilion, cemetery district, and some local animal control. The city contracts with and/or shares responsibility with the County for law enforcement, fire protection, and the library.

The City of Choteau owns the city hall/fire department building, library building, the enclosed pavilion (which is used for meetings and gatherings year-round), two well pump houses, city shop, visitor

information center, storage buildings, and the pool and bathhouse. The pool and bathhouse are operated by the Lion's Club. There are no major renovation plans for these buildings at the current time.

Choteau boards and commissions include the following:

- Zoning Commission
- Board of Adjustment
- Library Board
- Revolving Loan Committee
- Cemetery District

In addition, there are city representatives on the County's airport board and Conservation District board.

3. Fairfield

Fairfield, with a population of 708 in the year 2010, has a commission-executive form of government with four council members and a mayor. The town employs two full-time employees and two part-time employees. Local services provided by the town include fire and police protection, library, cemetery, swimming pool, and local animal control. Some of these services, such as police and fire protection, and library, are funded and operated in cooperation with the County.

The town owns the town shop, well houses, and the fire hall building. Town offices are located in rented space in the community hall.

Fairfield boards and commissions include the following.

- Library Board
- Swimming Pool Committee
- Economic Development-Revolving Loan Committee
- Cemetery Board

Although the town does not have a separate planning board, it does appoint a representative to the County planning board. The town council functions as the town's zoning committee.

4. Dutton

The Town of Dutton, with a population of 316 in the year 2010, has a commission-executive form of government with four city council members and a mayor, who are responsible for city government and city infrastructure and services. The town employs 1.FTE (full-time equivalents) year-round, with more help hired on a seasonal basis. Local services include fire and police protection (in cooperation with the county), library, cemetery, swimming pool, and two parks. Dutton provides some services, such as police and fire protection and library, in cooperation with the County.

The town owns the town shop (where town offices are located), fire hall, parks, the old railroad depot (next to one of the parks and which houses equipment and operating space for "Toys for Tots,") and library. The parks are run almost entirely by donations, much of which is raised at the annual "Fun Day." In addition, the town received a donation of $200,000 to set up a trust fund for parks.

Dutton boards and commissions include the following.

- Library Board
- Housing Board (responsible for reviewing applications for rehabilitation projects)
- Cemetery Board

5. Taxes

There are 25 separate taxing districts in Teton County. These include the local governments, school districts, special districts, State taxes and improvement districts. The mill levy for property owners is comprised of the levy that are assessed county-wide any school, city, or improvement levies that may apply to specific properties depending on location. Generally, education accounts for the largest share of the property tax.

The mill levy can vary significantly from county to county depending on taxable value, miles of road that must be maintained, range of services that are offered, investment in capital improvements such as new schools and other expenditures. According to the table, the mill levy for Teton County is generally lower than other counties of comparable size.

Table 1: Selected Financial Information for Teton County and Montana Counties of Similar Size- 2013

County	Population	Taxable Value	Total Mills	General Fund
Teton	6,065	$16,186m	131.6	$1,414,434
Blaine	6,604	$13,950m	183.06	$4,448,233
Madison	7,712	$77,356m	101.48	$9,691,257
Pondera	6,211	$13,380m	226.76	$1,520,680
Toole	5,138	$18,338m	171.60	$2,822,965

Source: Montana State University, Local Government Center, http://data.msulocalgov.org/

FIRE PROTECTION

Structural fire protection is provided within jurisdictional boundaries of the Teton County Fee Service area and municipal fire departments. On Federal lands, structure fire suppression is only provided to privately-owned structures paying a fee to Teton County Fire Fee Service. Teton County has five rural fire companies and three municipal fire departments providing wildland fire protection on all state and private lands under a cooperative fire control agreement between the Montana DNRC and Teton County. The rural fire companies provide structural and wildland fire protection to all unincorporated areas in Teton County (excluding Federal lands) with assistance from the Fire Fee Service and County funding. The municipal fire departments located in Choteau, Fairfield, and Dutton provide structural fire protection within their respective city limits.

The DNRC provides wildland fire protection on State lands and private lands that have signed up for this service under the affidavit program. The Lewis and Clark National Forest and BLM, have fire protection responsibility for all USFS and BLM lands, respectively, in Teton County. Mutual aid agreements are in place between Teton County and all municipalities. The County has a cooperative fire control agreement with the Montana DNRC and mutual aid agreements with the DNRC, BLM, several surrounding counties, and individual fire companies in Cascade and Lewis and Clark County.

Table 2: Teton County Fire Districts

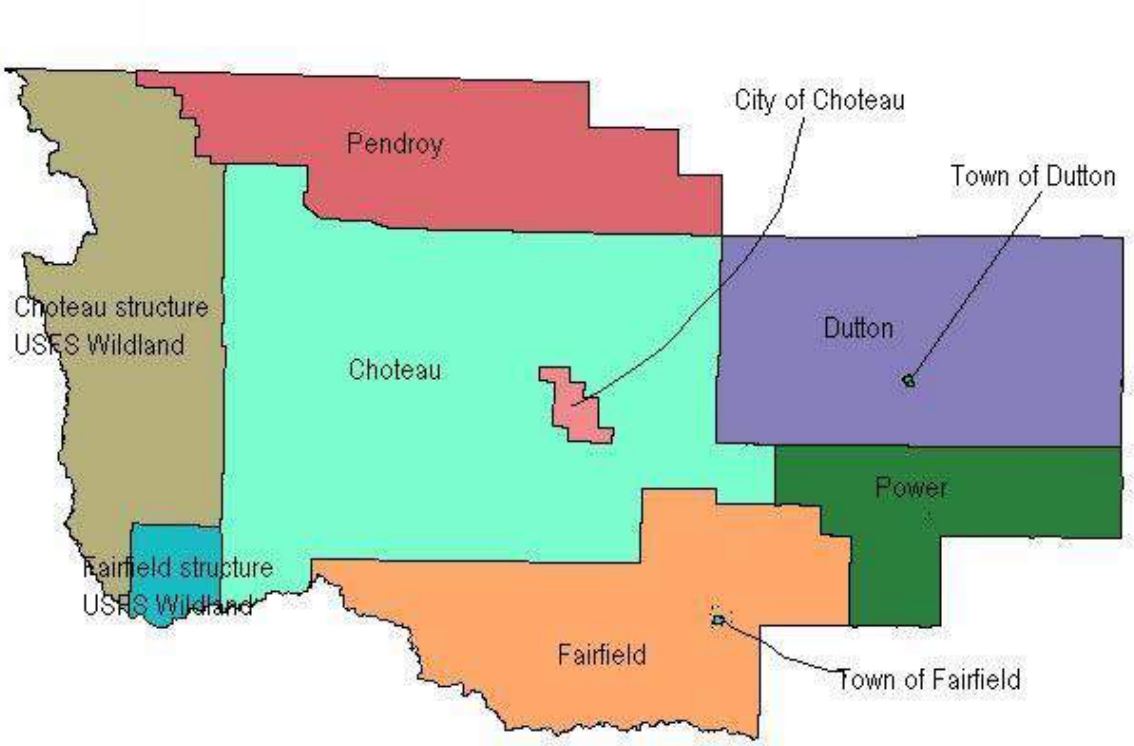
Fire District	Description	Issues
Teton County Fire & Rescue	Funding is primarily from a fire service area fee on structures supplemented with County general fund, Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Volunteer Fire Assistance Rural Fire Assistance (VFA/RFA) grant funding. The annual fire budget averages $125,000. Based on current funding and budget, Teton County Fire is likely in a position to maintain and upgrade vehicles and equipment within an acceptable rotation.	**Choteau:** WUI issues on the Front and river bottom around Choteau. **Dutton: T**he transmission lines and railroad increase fire starts as well as the CRP and crops that have a high potential for a large rangeland fire. **Power:** similar issues as Dutton **Fairfield:** Fairfield is responsible for the Sun River Canyon area. **Pendroy:** CRP fields, forestland, and oil giving a diverse fire regime, **Greenfield Irrigation District:** Escaped controlled burns. **Volunteers-** Training & Recruiting
Choteau Rural Volunteer Fire District & Choteau Fire Department	The Choteau Rural Volunteer Fire Company and the Choteau Fire Dept. share the same station, fire fighters, and equipment. While the Choteau Fire Dept. has fire protection responsibilities only within the city limits of Choteau, the Rural Fire Company is responsible for wildland and structural fire protection in throughout the district. The Choteau Fire Company response area is about 1,157 square miles (787 square miles of private land plus 400 square miles of National Forest).	Inadequate access into new and existing structures in the rural area Lack of standards or maintenance program for private bridges. Recruiting and training volunteers High wildland fire risks along the Rocky Mountain Front with response times up to 45 minutes

	The Company is staffed by 27 volunteer fire fighters. The Company's new main fire hall, located at the north end of Choteau, consists of 6 stalls and a meeting room. Outbuildings are used as cold storage and for Teton County Search and Rescue.	Narrow width of private driveways
Fairfield Rural Fire District	Volunteer organization that responds to structural and wildland fires in Fairfield and surrounding area comprising approximately 340 square miles The District responds to all types of to all types of emergencies including fire, medical, and rescue and is staffed by 28 volunteer firefighters.	
Dutton Rural Volunteer Fire Company & Dutton Fire Department	Volunteer organization with a coverage area consisting of farmland, farm houses, CRP land, and the town of Dutton. The Company serves as an automatic mutual aid partner with the Power Rural Volunteer Fire Company and 5 other fire departments in county. The Company presently operates a 1000 gallon per minute structural pumper and an enclosed 2-wheel trailer that hauls a Hurst tool, generator, lights, and rescue equipment.	Funding is provided by the local community tax budget and is barely covers operating costs. Water supply in unincorporated area outside of Dutton. Nearly all of our fire responses are wildland urban interface calls The area includes the main north/south arterial of the BNSF railroad and is bisected by Interstate 15, which adds to the vehicle accident and HazMat incident calls.
Power	Volunteer Fire Dept. serving southeast portion of the county. Has a mutual aid agreement with Dutton.	
Pendroy	Volunteer fire department with a response area of approximately 386 square miles (228 of which is private land and 98 are National Forest). Has mutual aid agreements with other districts.	Over the last three years, wildfires within the district have caused over $100,000 in damages.

(Source: Teton County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, 2011)

Figure 1: Teton County Fire District Map

Map provided by the



County Fire Warden, October 2001.

Wildland Urban Interface - Community Wildfire Protection Plan

1. Background

The Teton County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP**)** was originally drafted in 2005 and updated in 2011 update of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan with funding from the Title III Secure Rural Schools program. The purpose of the Teton County CWPP is to, "… reduce the wildfire risk for Teton County residents, landowners, businesses, communities, local governments, and state and federal agencies, identify high fire risk areas and develop strategies to reduce this risk, improve awareness of wildland fire issues locally, and improve accessibility of funding assistance to achieve these goals while maintaining appropriate wildfire response capabilities and sustainable natural resource management policies."

The CWPP identifies wildland urban interface areas and hazardous fuel conditions, identifies and prioritizes fuels reduction treatments, encourages and facilitates citizen and community wildfire hazard education, and promotes wildfire mitigation throughout Teton County. The CWPP planning committee includes representatives from rural and wildland fire districts, Montana DNRC, BLM, U.S. Forest Service, private land managers, various Teton County departments, and others. The goals of the planning process include integration with the National Fire Plan, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, and the Disaster Mitigation Act.

2. Wildland – Urban Interface

In 2007, Montana passed Senate Bill 145 establishing the State's wildfire policy and defining the wildland urban interface. Additionally, Senate Bill 51 was passed which required growth policies to include an evaluation of potential wildland fire. The definition of Wildland Urban Interface according to the Montana Code Annotated (MCA 76-13-102) is, "*"Wildland-urban interface" means the line, area, or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels."*

Due to public sentiment and uncertainty about legislation and state policies, the Planning Committee only designated public land as WUI areas in the Teton County CWPP. The planning committee recognized that this definition of the WUI was not based on the Montana definition of WUI and has no relationship with hazardous fuels or potential wildland fire risk. The County may revise the designation in the future.

The plan notes that it should not be assumed that just because an area is not identified as being within the WUI, that there is no wildland fire risk. The CWPP planning committee has identified wildland fire risk throughout Teton County based on vegetation data, fire history, and fire regime condition class. The plan have also made treatment recommendations in areas recognized as having a high fire risk.

3. Risk Assessment

Overall, the threat of wildland fire appears moderate to high for Teton County. This is in large part because of the intense agricultural activities as well as a large amount of National Forest, which is more difficult to access and has a high rate of lightning ignitions. However, for portions of Teton County, depending on conditions and weather partners, the threat may be low to moderate due to development and relatively flat

topography. Developments in rural areas face a range of risk factors. Developments that have all or most of the following attributes are at the highest level of risk:

1) Location in or surrounded by heavy fuel loads with a high degree of continuity (i.e. few significant firebreaks). Risk may be particularly high if the fuel load is grass, brush, and smaller trees subject to low moisture levels in short duration drought periods.

2) Steep slopes, which cause fires to spread more rapidly.

3) Limited fire suppression capacity including limited water supply capacity for fire suppression purposes, limited firefighting personnel and apparatus, and typically long response times for fire alarms.

4) Limited access for firefighting apparatus and limited evacuation routes for residents at risk.

5) Construction of structures to less than fully fire-safe practices,

6) Lack of maintenance of firebreaks and defensible zones around structures.

Developments in Teton County, particularly along the Front Range, often face high fire risk because of the combination of high fire hazard (high vegetative fuel loads) and limited fire suppression capabilities. Unfortunately, occupants in many of these areas also face high safety risks, especially from large fires that may spread quickly. The safety risks are often exacerbated by a limited number of roads (in the worst case only one access road) that are often narrow and subject to blockage by a wildland fire. Potential safety issues are also often increased by homeowners' reluctance to evacuate homes

4. Mitigation

The CWPP contains general mitigation strategies that apply to the entire county as well as specific strategies for high risk areas in the counties. The general strategies include:

1. Prevention – Outreach and education campaigns to prevent human caused fires.
2. Burning Permits - open burning on private lands within the County in excess of 25 square feet is not allowed without a burning permit. The County establishes open burn dates and rules. Open burning is not allowed during red flag warnings.
3. Defensible space - "*Living with Fire, A Guide for the Homeowner" had* recommendations for homeowners on the steps to take in order to create an effective defensible space.
4. Evacuation – The County should establish evacuation plans that identify escape routes and safety zones.
5. Access – Homeowners should create and maintain appropriate access for emergency vehicles including turn-around areas. Private roads should be designed to accommodate emergency vehicles.
6. Facility maintenance – Maintain recreation areas such as trailheads and campgrounds and keep them clear of debris. Install fire rings & barbeque pits to contain fires. Thin and prune trees and vegetation in these areas.
7. Fire District Response – Recruit and train volunteers and adequately fund local fire districts at adequate levels.
8. Other – Create a fire resistant buffer along roads and power line corridors through thinning timbered areas. Strictly enforce fire use regulations.

Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan

1. Background

Teton County and its incorporated municipalities intend to remain a disaster resistant community by implementing this Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan and the 2011 Community Wildfire Protection Plan. This plan is an update to the 2006 All Hazard Mitigation Plan. This plan identifies mitigation measures to be taken, guides the expenditure of funds, and raises awareness about the importance of taking personal and collective (public and private) action to prevent and prepare for reasonably foreseeable natural disasters. The plan update has been prepared utilizing funds supplied by the Federal Emergency Management Agency through Montana Disaster and Emergency Services and supplemented by county match.

Identifies the hazards evaluated in this plan and how they compare to the 2006 All Hazard Mitigation Plan. Identifies goals and projects that will mitigate and reduce the impacts of natural disasters. It also describes how the plan update will be implemented and monitored. The plan recommends projects for Teton County as well as the City of Choteau, Town of Fairfield and Town of Dutton. The types of projects that are recommended in the plan include education, emergency services, prevention, property protection, and structural projects.

2. Hazard Profiles

The following table summarizes the issues and risk assessment associated with each of the hazards that were evaluated in the plan.

Table 3: Hazards in Teton County

	Description Issues	**Risk Assessment**
Drought	Direct effects of drought include: • Reduced crop, livestock, and rangeland productivity • Increased fire hazard • Reduced water levels and potential for reduced drinking water supply • Damage to wildlife and fish habitat.	The magnitude/severity of drought for each participating jurisdiction is: • County – Critical • City of Choteau – Limited • Towns of Dutton – Limited • Town of Fairfield – Limited
Flood	Several types of flood events can occur in Teton County. Riverine flooding occurs along the Teton River and its tributaries. The flat and mountainous terrain of Teton County creates potential for flash floods and sheet flow events. Rain-on-snow events can and do occur, particularly in the higher elevations. These events often contain enough moisture to cause flooding on the Teton River and most of its major tributaries in the county. In general these flood events can be predicted 24 to 72 hours in advance of the rising waters.	While the County of Teton does have a significant history of flooding, its overall rating for magnitude is 'Limited' given the sparse population and development. However, the City of Choteau, given its high number of structures in the floodplain (especially critical facilities) and potential for damage to infrastructure is rated as Critical.

Earthquake	Earthquakes may cause landslides and rupture dams. Severe earthquakes destroy power and telephone lines, gas, sewer, or water mains, which, in turn, may set off fires and/or hinder firefighting or rescue efforts. Earthquakes also may cause buildings and bridges to collapse.	As urbanization and development increase in Montana, particularly in the mountainous regions, the potential for losses from earthquakes also increases unless buildings are designed with modern building codes and standards.
Hazardous Materials	A release or spill of bulk hazardous materials could result in fire, explosion, toxic cloud or direct contamination of people and property. The effects may involve a local site or many square miles. Health problems may be immediate, such as corrosive effects on skin and lungs, or be gradual, such as the development of cancer from a carcinogen. Damage to property could range from immediate destruction by explosion to permanent contamination by a persistent hazardous material. Accidents involving the transportation of hazardous materials could be just as catastrophic as accidents involving stored chemicals, possibly more so, since the location of a transportation accident is not predictable.	Given proximity of much of the population to Interstate 15, the railroad, and to several highways, which may also carry some interstate traffic, there is potential for a serious event that could affect hundreds or more residents. The overall magnitude and loss potential on a particularly community or part of the County will be dependent on the nature and timing of an incident. Given the presence of and proximity to hazardous materials routes previously discussed, the magnitude/severity of hazardous materials is rated as critical for all jurisdictions in the County.
Landslides	Landslide may occur on slopes steepened by man during construction, or on natural ground never disturbed. However, most slides occur in areas that have had sliding in the past. All landslides are initiated by factors such as weaknesses in the rock and soil, earthquake activity, the occurrence of heavy snow or rainfall, or construction activity that changes a critical factor involved with maintaining stability of the soil or geology of the area.	Communities in the transition zone between the steep slopes of the Rocky Mountains and the rangelands associated with the Rocky Mountain Front area have an elevated risk of experiencing destructive landslides. Small slides or slumps are also common along waterways. In Teton County, communities near the Teton River, Muddy Creek, or other drainages (including earthen irrigation canals) may have an increased risk of incurring the secondary effects of a mudslide in the water channel. Landslide risk should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to reduce or eliminate exposure of public infrastructure and private development.
Severe thunderstorms, wind, hail Lighting	Thunderstorms, windstorms, and related weather events will continue to be a hazard for existing and future populations and development across Teton County. The severity of any given event can vary greatly. Because of the potential to completely destroy major facilities, tornadoes have tremendous potential for economic losses and casualties. Severe thunderstorms, hail, lightning, tornadoes, and high winds have the potential to	The overall magnitude and loss potential on a particularly community or part of the County will be dependent on the nature and timing of an incident. Due to the nature of severe thunderstorms and related hazards, the magnitude - severity of these hazards is uniform across the County:

	cause: □ Loss of life and injury □ Property damage (complete destruction possible in the case of tornadoes and extreme winds, other damage to roofs, siding, windows, vehicles, equipment, from strong winds, tornadoes, and hail) □ Power outages and related effects □ Crop damage (particularly from hail) □ Livestock fatalities and injuries □ Damage to utility infrastructure (power lines, etc.)	
Severe winter storms	Winter storm hazards present one of the greatest threats to life of any hazard in Montana. Statistics on winter deaths are difficult to obtain, but nationwide there are on average 100 lives directly and indirectly lost to winter weather, more than lightning, hurricanes, or tornadoes. Winter storms are considered to be deceptive killers because most deaths are indirectly related to the storm. People die in traffic accidents on snow- or ice-covered roads, from hypothermia due to prolonged exposure to cold, and from heart attacks due to overexertion.	Extreme winter weather events occur throughout Teton County and include blizzards, extreme cold temperatures, heavy snow, ice storms, and freezes. .

Source: Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan - 2013
Note: Wildland Fire is addressed in the Community Wildland Fire Protection Plan (CWPP) - 2011

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The County Sheriff's department is the single local law enforcement entity for the County, including all incorporated and unincorporated towns. Choteau, Dutton and Fairfield contract with the County for law enforcement services. A Forest Service law enforcement officer serves all federal forest lands along the Rocky Mountain Front, an area that includes several Counties.

The sheriff and under-sheriff are stationed in Choteau at the Teton County Sheriff's Office Detention Center adjacent to the Courthouse Annex. The remaining deputies reside throughout the County as dictated by need and coverage agreements with the municipalities. The County has agreements with Pendroy County, Choteau County, and Toole County for prisoners.

The Sheriff's office responsibilities include County animal control, DARE program, Search and Rescue Command, County 9-1-1 coordinator, Russel County Drug Task Force, open burning permits and County coroner duties. All of Teton County is covered by 9-1-1 emergency phone services.

Table 3 displays crime rates for other counties in the region. Typically, counties with urban areas will have higher crime rates due to a higher concentration of people. As indicated by data in the table, Teton County is in the mid-range compared to other counties in the region.

Table 5: Crime Rates - 2014

County	Crime Rater per 1000 People
Teton	39.02
Cascade	90.04
Chouteau	11.24
Glacier	76.62
Pondera	33.52
Toole	80.06

Source: Montana Board of Crime Controls, http://mbcc.mt.gov/Data/CrimeData/MOR.asp

LIBRARIES

Teton County has three public libraries, one each in Choteau, Dutton, and Fairfield. The libraries are free for all county residents. For three small country schools in the County and for three Hutterite Colony schools, the Choteau library also essentially serves as the school library, sometime shipping books out in boxes.

In the late 1990s, County residents voted for a joint City-County approach to library support. The towns each provide the building space and related utilities and maintenance. The County provides the majority of the funding, comprising approximately three-quarters of all government funding at each of the three libraries in 2000. Private party donations are also a critical component of total library funding, constituting nearly one third of the total income for Choteau and Fairfield libraries in 2000.

The three libraries function independent from one another, with their own separate advisory boards, but each is also represented on a County wide board. There are five members on this board—one appointee from each city and two appointed at large by the County commissioners.

Securing adequate funding for libraries is likely to continue to be a challenge. According to data from the Montana State Library, Choteau has the largest collection and largest amount of users per week. All three libraries have greatly expanded their collection size with e-books and other electronic resources. Internet access is becoming more important for all three libraries. Only Choteau Public Library offered technology training classes.

Table 6: Teton County Library Facts, 2014

	Choteau	Fairfield	Dutton
Service Area Population	2,828	1,818	1,426
Users Per Week	365	72	125
Collection Size (Print)	18,730	5,069	6,860
Public PCs	19	8	5
Public Internet Users per week	355	51	33
Total Attendees in Technology Classes	21	0	0

Source: Montana State Library.
http://msl.mt.gov/Library_Development/For_Public_Librarians/Statistics/reports/default.asp

EDUCATION

1. Education – K-12

In 2016, Teton County had eight elementary schools, three high schools and one K-12 school in Dutton. The Dutton Elementary and Dutton High Schools consolidated to a K-12 school in 1995. The Dutton/Brady schools consolidated in the 2005 – 2006 school year with an enrollment of 220.

Greenfield Elementary was the only public school district that experienced an increase from 2005. The enrollment in this district, however, has fluctuated. From 2005 to 2010, enrollment declined and then increased between 2010 and 2015 and continues to grow in enrollment. Four of the districts, Choteau Elementary, Fairfield High School, Power Elementary and Pendroy Elementary have experienced a decline in enrollment of about one-third over the last ten-years. Another two schools, Choteau High School and Power High School have lost about one-quarter of their enrollment. This dramatic decline is due to a combination of the economic downturn in local job opportunities, lower birth rates and fewer family households.

Table 6: Enrollment in Public Schools in Teton County, 2000

	2005	2010	2015	2005 to 2015 Change	2005 to 2015 % Change
CHOTEAU ELEM	313	250	214	(99)	-31.6%
CHOTEAU H S	153	151	112	(41)	-26.8%
BYNUM ELEM	28	32	26	(2)	-7.1%
FAIRFIELD ELEM	199	184	178	(21)	-10.6%
FAIRFIELD H S	174	120	108	(66)	-37.9%
DUTTON ELEM					
DUTTON K-12 SCHOOLS	117				
DUTTON/BRADY K-12 SCHOOLS		166	147	54	-24.5%
POWER ELEM	96	89	66	(30)	-31.3%
POWER H S	54	59	40	(14)	-25.9%
GOLDEN RIDGE ELEM	40	42	40	0	0%
PENDROY ELEM	34	37	23	(11)	-32.4%
GREENFIELD ELEM	66	50	72	6	9.1%

Source: Montana Office of Public Instruction,
http://opi.mt.gov/Reports&Data/Measurement/Index.html?gpm=1_4

There are no private schools in the county. Hutterite Colonies have opted to be included as "attendance centers" in the public school system. The Midway Colony School is in Conrad and the Birch Creek and Pondera Colony attendance centers are located in Dutton. Families that opt for home schooling must register with the Teton County Superintendent of Schools.

The office of the Teton County Superintendent of Schools is found in the county courthouse. Responsibilities of the superintendent include general supervision of the public schools, preserving all official school records, advising school trustees, acting as the hearing officer in school controversies resulting from decisions of district trustees, chairing the transportation committee, calculating levies for all school budgets with the county, registering educator and bus driver licenses, and receiving home school

notifications. The county superintendent carries out other duties as prescribed by the legislature, board of education and state superintendent of public instruction.

Table 7: School Facilities

District	Grades	Location
Bynum Attendance Center	K-8	210 Central Ave., Bynum
Miller Colony School	1-8	
Choteau	K-6 7-8 & 9-12	107 7th Ave., NW – Choteau 204 7th Ave. NW – Choteau
Golden Ridge Attendance Center	K-8	1374 Highway 408, Fairfield
New Rockport Attendance Center Colony School		202 18th Rd. N.W Choteau
Greenfield	K-6 & 7-8	590 Highway 431, Fairfield
Dutton	K-6, 7-8, 9-12	101 2nd St. NE, Dutton
Birch Creek Colony & Pondera Colony	Attendance Centers	101 2nd St., NE Dutton
Midway Colony School	K-8	400 Midway Colony Lane, Conrad
Fairfield	K-6, 7-8, 9-12	13 7th Street, Fairfield
Pendroy School	K-8	700 W Pendroy road, Pendroy
Power	K-6, 7-8, 9-12	401 Teton Ave., Power

Sources: http://www.tetoncomt.org/supofschools/index.aspx

2. Post Secondary Opportunities

Other than Internet courses available to individuals, there are no college level course available on a regular basis to adults in Teton County. Classes via video-conferencing are available throughout the state on the Metnet program. Nearby institutions offering post secondary education include:

- Montana State University - College of Great Falls
- Montana State University Northern, Havre
- University of Great Falls, Great Falls

HEALTH CARE

1. County Health Department

The County Health Department, located in Choteau, provides a number of public health services. These include a number of programs for low income individuals, especially programs for women and children. The County Health Department provides breast and cervical cancer screening for qualified individuals, provides flu shots, and administers the local Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. It is the local office for Healthy Start Programs, such as the Montana Initiative for the Abatement of Mortality Infants. County Health Department information is available at www.tetoncomt.org.

2. Emergency Facilities and Hospitals

In 2015, Benefis Hospital based in Great Falls, purchased Teton Medical Center in Choteau. The Benefis - Teton Medical Center (TMC) is the County's single critical access, or limited service, hospital. The facility provides have a 24-hour emergency room, hospital services, a long term care wing, outpatient clinic, lab, x-ray, and physical therapy departments. Specialists travel to our hospital from other locations to offer Women's Health check-ups and cardiac testing and care. The facility also includes an extended care unit with 31 general nursing home beds, a special care locked facility and adult day care.

In 2010, the Teton Health Services Center participated in a community health survey. The results of the survey included:

- BTMC received an average overall services rating between "good" and "excellent"
- 71.9% felt that Choteau is a "healthy" or "very healthy" place to live
- 73.7% said local health care services are very important to the economic wellbeing of the community.
- BTMC's top health services were physical therapy and x-ray.

3. Nursing Homes and Other Medical Facilities

Teton County Nursing Home, located in Choteau, is a licensed forty-one bed skilled nursing home. Teton County Nursing Home is Medicare/Medicaid certified. If provides physical therapy, occupational therapy, Alzheimer Care, respiratory care, nursing rehabilitation, short and long term care, adult day care, and speech therapy.

4. Ambulance and Emergency Medical Services

Teton County has a County ambulance service. There are two ambulances in Choteau, one in Fairfield and one in Power. The ambulance units are on call 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Ambulances are manned by Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and are assisted by Quick Response Units (QRUs) in Dutton and Pendroy. County ambulance service also has access to a medical helicopter (Mercy Flight) stationed in Great Falls. Information on the ambulance service and emergency medical service are available on the County's website at www.tetoncomt.org.

5. Health Indicators

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services maintains statistics for every county in Montana. According to data from the MT DPHHS, Teton County has lower that statewide averages for incidents of stroke, diabetes and heart attacks. It exceeds state averages for asthma. The county also has higher than average rates of deaths from cancer and heart disease. These diseases are often associated with lifestyle choices such as diet, exercise and smoking. More frequently, public health officials are undertaking educational campaigns and working with communities to address to promote more active lifestyles and access to local foods.

While the county has lower than average rates of deaths from motor vehicle accidents it has higher rates of death from work related injuries. It has lower rates of incidents of drug related deaths and suicides. It also has a lower teenage birth rate than the rest of the state. Like many rural counties, Teton County is ranked as having a shortage of dental health professionals and primary care professionals.

Table 8: Selected Health Indicators for Teton County & Montana - 2011

Indicator	**Teton County**	**Montana**
Stroke rate per 100,000	129.1	182.2
Diabetes rate per 100,000	93.9	115.4
Mycoridal Infarction (heart attack)	119.9	147.3
Asthma	87.4	71.7
Deaths from cancer per 100,000	231.2	200.9
Deaths from chronic lower respiratory disease per 100,000	76	63.9
Deaths from Heart Disease	234.5	198
Deaths from motor vehicle accidents per 100,000	19.8	25.6
Deaths from work related injuries	9.9	3.7
Other accidental deaths per 100,000	10.41	10
Suicide Rate	9.9	20.3
Drug Related deaths	9.9	13.8
% of children age 2-3 with all vaccinations	87.4	63.0
Births to adolescents per 1000	6.3	29.2
Dental Health Professional Shortage	Yes	
Primary Care Professional Shortage	Yes	

Source: http://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/Epidemiology/OESS-CHD.aspx

SOCIAL SERVICES

1. Office of Public Assistance

The local office of the state's public assistance program is located in Choteau. They provide Medicaid, Food Stamps, and other types of cash assistance to qualified individuals.

2. Child and Family Services

The community social worker is located at the Child and Family Services office in Choteau.

3. Seniors

Teton County supports the four senior centers with a mill levy. The Teton County Council on Aging Coordinator works with all four centers. The centers provide senior meals, meals-on-wheels, homemaker/home chore services, and Choteau senior center also provides some limited transportation assistance.

There are four senior centers in Teton County, in Power, Choteau, Dutton, and Fairfield. The North Central Agency on Aging, located in Conrad, serves Teton County.

4. Other Programs

A number of other social service programs are also available to County residents, but program offices are out of County. These include the following, all of which are located in Great Falls:

- Human Resources and Development Corporation
- Opportunities, Inc.
- Blind and Low Vision Services
- Childcare Resource and Referral
- Developmental Disabilities Program
- Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- Child Support Enforcement

Appendix – Survey Results

Where do you live?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Bynum	1.9%	1
Choteau	66.0%	35
Collins	1.9%	1
Dutton	0.0%	0
Fairfield	5.7%	3
Pendroy	5.7%	3
Power	1.9%	1
In rural area of County	11.3%	6
Do not live in the County	5.7%	3
answered question		53

Please tell us how important each feature of Teton County/City of Choteau is to you.

Answer Options	Rating Average
Agriculture	3.52
Mountains	3.56
Open space	3.46
Small town/rural lifestyle	3.71
Sense of Community	3.58
Affordable housing	3.40
Wildlife	3.24
Friendly people	3.63
Wilderness	3.08
Clean water	3.71
Clean air	3.71

1= Not Important 2 = Somewhat Important 3 =Important 4= Very Important

Please indicate the degree you agree or disagree with the following strategies regarding economic development where you live. Answer Options	Rating Average
Attract and create new jobs in the county	3.44
Support small businesses	3.65
Strengthen Main Street businesses and revitalize downtown	3.48
Promote value added agriculture products from the county	3.37
Support increased tourism	3.06
Support renewable energy investment. (i.e. wind, solar, ...)	3.22
Increase workforce development & training opportunities	3.23
Support Internet based home business and work opportunities	3.21

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Somewhat Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree

Please indicate the degree you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding infrastructure and local services in where you live. Answer Options	Rating Average
Roads - streets need to be improved	3.37
The water systems need to be upgraded where I live	2.55
The sewer system needs to be upgraded where I live	2.76
The area where I live needs more parks	1.92
The area where I live needs more trails	2.20
We need more places to shop	2.76
The county needs better access to health care services	2.56
The county has adequate resources to respond to disasters	2.94
There needs to be more activities for young people	2.96
Transit options should be expanded	2.45
We need faster/cheaper Internet service	3.33

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Somewhat Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree

Please indicate the degree you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding land use and natural resources. Answer Options	Rating Average
Noxious weeds are a problem	2.94
Protecting water quality should be a priority	3.53
Conservation easements are a good tool to protect open space and wildlife habitat	2.80
New growth should be located near existing towns	3.10
Protecting private property rights is important	3.51
Natural resource development (oil & gas) would be good for the county	2.80
New development should not increase property taxes	3.35
Properties that have been contaminated with hazardous substances should be cleaned up	3.53
Identify new areas for commercial development	2.94
Identify new areas for industrial development	2.84
The county or towns should preserve historic properties	3.16

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Somewhat Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree