



PRAIRIE COUNTY

Growth Policy

December 15, 2016

Submitted to:

**Prairie County Planning
Board**

Submitted by:



PRAIRIE COUNTY

MONTANA

2016 Growth Policy

December 15, 2016

Prepared for:

Prairie County Planning Board

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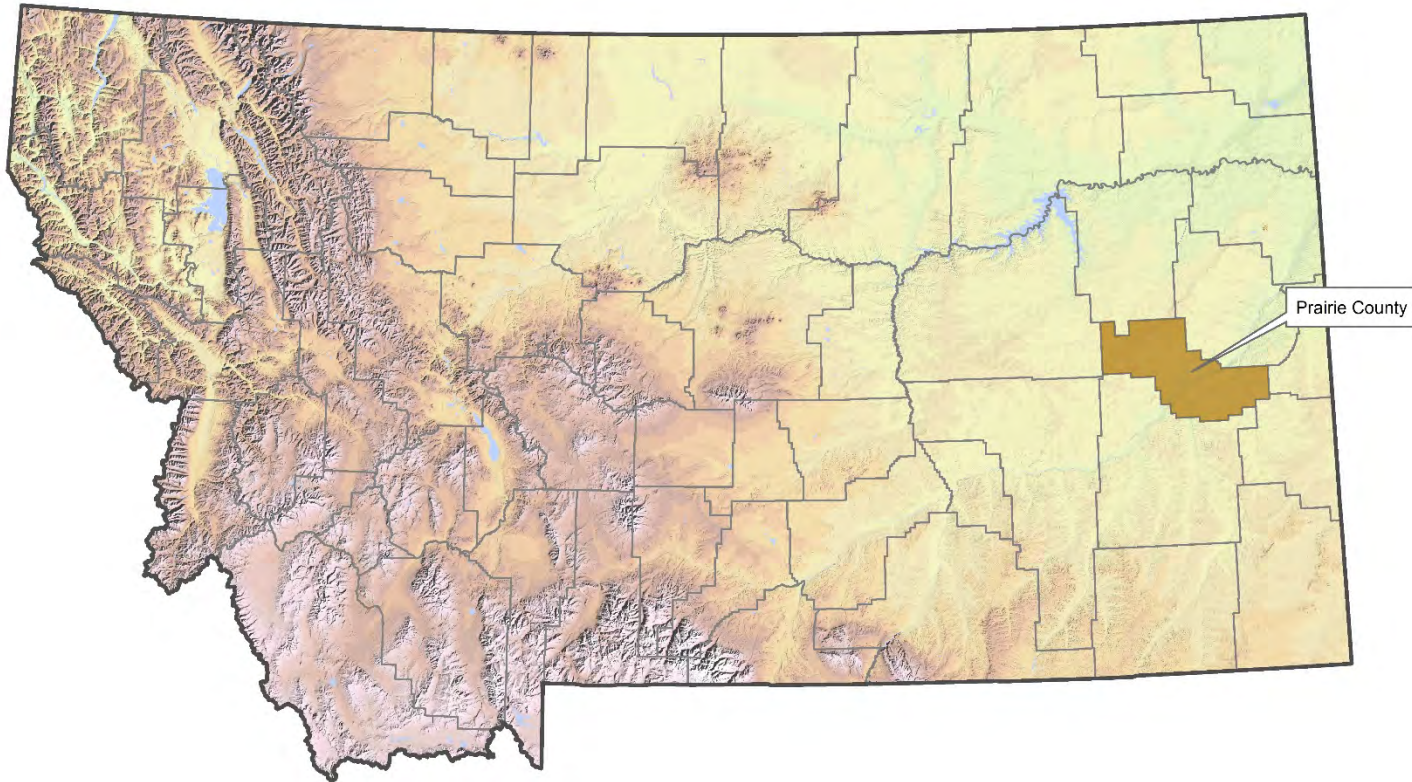
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Map 1 - Location of Prairie County



MAP 1:
PRAIRIE COUNTY, MONTANA
LOCATION

A compass rose with the cardinal directions N (North), S (South), E (East), and W (West) labeled. Below it is a scale bar with markings at 0, 25, 50, and 100 Miles.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prairie County is a place of abundant wildlife, productive farms and ranches, a variety of natural resources and impressive scenic beauty. The early 21st century presents Prairie County and Eastern Montana with unique opportunities and challenges. Its leaders and residents are called upon to exercise greater imagination, creative economics, an enhanced

understanding of global interdependence to prosper now and in the future.



Hay field outside of Terry

This Growth Policy is meant to guide decisions regarding not just land use but also economic, social and cultural factors that affect Prairie County. Under State law the County Planning Board has the duty to “prepare and propose a Growth Policy.” Statute defines a “Growth Policy” as synonymous with comprehensive or master plans.

The County Planning Board and the Board of County Commissioners are following a proactive course with this Growth Policy in order to address issues of importance to all residents. The Policy will allow the County to define its future to achieve its goals instead of simply waiting to react to individual events and moving from one short-term fix to another. This document is an update of the previous 2006 County Growth Policy, which was itself developed from the 1993 County Comprehensive Plan.

This update addresses the jurisdictional area of Prairie County and excludes the incorporated Town of Terry. The Town has developed its own Growth Policy. The unincorporated communities of Mildred and Fallon are included in the jurisdictional area of this Growth Policy.

Prairie County ranks 39th out of 56 counties in the State in total land area, covering over a million acres of land in the east-central plains of Montana. Prairie County is bordered by six different counties including: Dawson and McCone Counties on the north, Garfield County on the northwest, Custer and Fallon Counties on the South, and Wibaux County on the East. The Town of Terry is the County seat and is situated between Miles City and Glendive on Interstate 94.

Major waterways in the County include the Yellowstone and Powder Rivers. The Yellowstone River spans approximately 671 miles and is the principal tributary of the upper Missouri River. The River runs the length of the County from southwest to northeast and is a vital source of



Old bridge abutments on the Yellowstone River outside of Terry

both ground and surface water for the residents of the County. The Yellowstone also provides irrigation for crops, drinking water for livestock and recreation opportunities for residents and tourists. The Powder River runs approximately 375 miles from northeast Wyoming to southeast Montana, where it flows into the Yellowstone River in the County. In addition, there are many creeks and streams in Prairie County, which are invaluable to the residents of this fairly dry region.

Agriculture is the largest employment sector in the County. The County's top commodities include dry edible beans, sugar-beets, sheep, cattle, barley, and wheat. The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad runs through the County and the Town of Terry and provides for seasonal shipments of dry edible beans.

The largest employers in the County include the Hospital, the County, Buffalo Rapids Irrigation District and Terry Public Schools. Maintaining and supporting the public school system is a priority for residents in the County. Resident's support of both curricular and extra-curricular activities in the school system shows that education is important to them. Organizations such as 4-H clubs, rodeo associations, the Prairie County Chamber of Commerce, the American Legion, churches, various lodges, roping and riding clubs, and others have long been an important part of life in the County. These organizations serve not only as social groups, but as learning and teaching experiences for all residents.

This document contains eleven sections that provide the rationale for the goals mentioned below and the foundation for achieving other goals identified in the document. Those sections include:

- Interagency Coordination and Policies: This section is meant to lay the ground work for ensuring cooperation and coordination between Federal and State management agencies and Prairie County.
- Goals and Objectives: Taking advantage of opportunities and addressing issues does not happen by chance. It requires that people be willing to set practical and achievable Goals. This section identifies the Goals and Objectives set by the County's residents.

- Introduction: A description of the County, its location, features and history.
- Population Characteristics: A description of the County's current and projected future population.
- Economy: A description of the County's current and desired future economic situation.
- Local Services and Facilities: A description of the services the County provides and the infrastructure it maintains.
- Housing: A description of the current housing stock in the County.
- Land Use: A description of current and potential future land use in the County.
- Natural Resources: A description of the resources that provide the foundation for life in the County.
- Public Engagement: This section describes the process used to engage County residents in order to obtain their opinions on the issues the Growth Policy should address.
- Implementation Steps: A description of the actual steps the County may take to achieve the Goals and Objectives.

Ultimately the Growth Policy is meant to help the residents of the County to anticipate local, national and global changes and to be prepared to take the steps necessary to ensure that those changes result in long-term benefits for the County.

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INTERAGENCY COORDINATION AND POLICIES

A primary purpose of this Growth Policy is to foster cooperation and coordination between the County and Federal and State land management agencies. Shared areas of interest include but are not limited to grazing, farming, mining, recreation, wildlife, transportation and all other activities related to natural resources on lands managed by Federal and State agencies. This includes private lands affected by public land management policies. Prairie County also encourages coordination and cooperation between Federal and State agencies on issues such as wildfire suppression; noxious weed control; and maintenance of County, State and Federal road systems.

Federal and State laws require that agencies coordinate with the local governments and consider local land use plans in the process of planning and managing Federal and State lands. Federal and State agencies proposing management actions on lands they administer within Prairie County shall prepare and submit in writing, in a timely manner, report(s) on the goals, objectives and predicted impacts of any such management actions to the Prairie County Commissioners at Box 125, Terry, MT 59349. The Commissioners will then determine the appropriate action to be taken by the County, and provide input, information and comment on proposed actions or activities as applicable. The Commissioners will reciprocate by notifying applicable Federal and State agencies of actions proposed by the County that could affect land resources and amenities in the County. They will solicit input and comment from the applicable agencies. The purpose of this coordination and cooperation is to minimize any negative impact of public land management upon residents and to maximize all potential benefits.

Prairie County is designated as a collaborating agency with the Bureau of Land Management on the Big Dry Resource Management Plan. The County also cooperates with Federal and State agencies responsible for the recovery and protection of all threatened and endangered species within the County. The County requests that all Federal and State agencies working in Prairie County to respect the goals, objectives and policies identified in this Growth Policy.

The following are the issues and accompanying policies that Prairie County would like appropriate Federal and State agencies to consider when making management decisions.

Agency Coordination

Policy 1: Federal and State agencies proposing actions that will impact Prairie County shall prepare and submit in writing, and in a timely manner, reports on the purposes, objectives and estimated impacts of such actions, including economic impacts, to the Prairie County Commissioners. The County Commissioners shall review such reports and provide guidance and advice prior to any Federal or State management actions.

Land Management

Policy 1: In compliance with Federal and State laws, all land management agencies shall follow the guidance found in the Prairie County Growth Policy and coordinate with the County Commissioners for the purpose of planning for and managing Federal and State lands within the jurisdictional area of Prairie County.

Policy 2: The County and its residents support a “multiple use” approach to the management of Federal and State lands in Prairie County.

Policy 3: Prairie County will protect private property rights.

Policy 4: Federal and State agencies will respect the private property rights of residents.

Policy 5: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will obtain guidance from Prairie County regarding any travel management planning that takes place for BLM lands.

Land Acquisitions or Exchanges

Policy 1: There should be a “no net gain” in the amount of public lands in the County either through purchase or land exchanges, thus protecting the County’s limited tax base.

Policy 2: Recognizing that land is essential to the success of the County’s economy and residents, it is the policy of the County that all Federal and State land acquisitions and exchanges benefit the residents of the County.

Policy 3: The County Commission and County residents shall be notified of, consulted with and otherwise involved in all Federal and State land adjustments in the County. Agreement of the County Commission shall be required prior to any such land adjustments. Furthermore, the County shall be involved in the planning of Federal and State land adjustments within the County.

Policy 4: The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation shall assist Prairie County in understanding and coordinating any potential land exchanges, in order to maximize the amount of patented fee-simple lands.

Policy 5: Federal agencies shall not acquire private lands, or estate rights in private lands, within the County without first ensuring that:

1. Parity in land ownership status between public and private lands.
2. Private property interests are protected and enhanced.

Public Land Grazing

Policy 1: Grazing of livestock on Federal and State lands shall continue at historic levels and provide for the protection of property rights, while maintaining stewardship of land.

Policy 2: Incentives for improving public grazing lands and promoting good land stewardship shall be developed through:

1. Encouraging grazing permittee ownership of range improvements;
2. Grazing fee schedules that adhere to an equitable and predictable fee schedule.
3. Allowing subleasing of permittee grazing leases;
4. Maximum flexibility in allotment management plans during natural disasters and normal grazing management;
5. Increased grazing capacity or allowing other economic benefits to accrue to permittees who make investments to improve range conditions.

Policy 3: Federal and State agencies shall develop, in coordination with the County Commissioners an effective Section 8 process pursuant to the Public Rangeland Improvement Act of 1978 and shall implement the procedures and guidelines identified in the plan to account for the allocation and expenditure of range improvement funds.

Policy 4: Prairie County supports “no net loss” of livestock grazing on public land for any permittee without consultation and coordination with the Prairie County Grazing District and the Prairie County Commissioners.

Policy 5: Federal and State agencies must coordinate their grazing management with the County Commission, appropriate County boards, and other affected parties.

Water and Water Rights

Policy 1: The Prairie County Commissioners and County Conservation District shall be notified of all State, inter-State, and Federal actions that may impact surface or groundwater resources that affect water allocations of over 50-acre feet. Notification should be provided well in advance of such actions. The County Commission must acknowledge official notifications in writing before they are considered valid.

Land Use

Policy 1: Federal and State agencies shall not obstruct agricultural operations or multiple uses operations through the management of their respective lands.

Policy 2: All land use management decisions shall take into account the economic effect upon the County’s economy, particularly agricultural production.

Policy 3: The County supports the development of mining operations that comply with all applicable laws and regulations, approved operating permits, and sound reclamation practices.

Policy 4: The County Commission and residents will have input on industrial emissions and burning that could occur in the County.

Wetlands

Policy 1: Federal and State agencies responsible for monitoring the condition of wetlands, waterways and riparian areas in the County shall coordinate their efforts with the County Commission and applicable County boards.

Policy 2: Federal and State agencies managing waterways, wetlands and riparian areas containing threatened or endangered species shall coordinate their management activities and plans with the County Commission and/or the County Planning Board.

Wilderness and Wild/Scenic Rivers

Policy 1: Any Bureau of Land Management wilderness management areas or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern shall only be designated in the County with expressed written consent of the County Commissioners upon recommendation of the County Planning Board.

Policy 2: Any Wild and Scenic River designations shall only be designated with expressed written consent of the County Commissioners upon recommendation of the County Planning Board. Such designations shall comply with all County water use plans as well as with current and future Federal and State water use plans.

Policy 3: The Bureau of Land Management will identify the potential economic benefits and costs of any proposed wilderness areas to the County and its residents.

Wildlife Management

Policy 1: Animals, including prairie dogs, predators, bison, wild horses and burros shall not be allowed to become a detriment to the operations or property values of County landowners.

Policy 2: Federal and State agencies managing the protection and recovery of threatened and/or endangered species within the County shall coordinate protection and recovery plans with the County Commissioners and other appropriate County boards.

Policy 3: Federal and State agencies with authority to manage wildlife shall coordinate with the County Commission and the appropriate County boards on management issues related to wildlife.

Policy 4: Federal and State agencies shall coordinate their management practices within the County with the County Commission, appropriate County boards and affected property owners with regard to wildlife management, grazing and the impacts upon vegetation.

Policy 5: Federal and State agencies shall utilize recreational hunting of game animals as a management tool for population control. Without such management options, compensation must be provided to private landowner for economic damage that occurs to their agricultural operations due to wildlife depredations.

Policy 6: The County shall review all plans for the protection of aquatic, threatened and endangered species within the County. Acknowledgement from the County Commissioners must be received before any plans for the protection of such species is implemented in the County.

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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following pages discuss the goals and objectives that the County can take to encourage growth and to address the opportunities and needs for a vibrant economy and high quality of life.

Economy

To be successful, Prairie County must provide its residents with opportunities to prosper economically. Therefore, the County will work to maintain, strengthen and diversify its economy.

Goals	Objectives
Attract new residents and stabilize the County's population size and age diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Market excellent services and quality of life, including the senior center and hospital. b. Provide clear information on the process for building homes or creating subdivisions. c. Minimize regulations and bureaucracy to encourage people to relocate to Terry and Prairie County. d. Encourage retirees to relocate to the County and to build or renovate existing homes.
Continue to reduce or eliminate lands enrolled in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Encourage Federal agencies to allow as much agricultural activity as possible on lands currently enrolled in the CRP. b. Reduce competition within the private sector between irrigated hay production on non-CRP lands and hay produced from CRP lands.
Protect all water rights in the County, including reserved rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Maintain current water rights and existing reservations, particularly the Conservation District's water reservations.
Ensure safe, clean drinking and irrigation water for County residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Monitor water quality issues in the Yellowstone River Valley via Federal and State regulatory agencies.
Ensure Federal and State land management decisions benefit the residents of the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure public land management decisions follow the guidance in the growth policy. b. Encourage the development of minerals on Federal lands c. Maintain and enhance grazing privileges on Federal land.
Diversify the economy of the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Attract value-added agricultural enterprises. b. Encourage more tourism and recreational use in the County
Create an equitable Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Lobby the State congressional delegation to address the system.

Local Services & Infrastructure

Daily life in the County is dependent upon the efficient provision of services, including maintenance of roads, law enforcement, education and healthcare. Therefore, the County will strive to provide adequate community services and infrastructure.

Goals	Objectives
Provide safe and efficient County roads, bridges and culverts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure timely and consistent maintenance of road infrastructure. b. Facilitate cooperation between the County and Federal and State agencies to maintain County roads accessing public lands.
Provide adequate and efficient law enforcement services to residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Improve communication, cooperation and coordination between the County Sheriff's Department, other local governments and Federal and State law enforcement officials.
Provide effective fire protection services to residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Improve communication, cooperation and coordination between the County and Federal and State fire-fighting agencies.
Provide adequate and efficient search and rescue services to address an increase in recreational use on public lands in the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Obtain Federal and State assistance to provide adequate staff and to operate search and rescue operations in the County.
Ensure the sustainable operation of Prairie Community Hospital.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Maintain the hospital's designation as a critical access facility.
Maintain high quality school facilities and staff and attract additional students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide adequate classroom resources and technology. b. Support a high level of student extra-curricular activities and opportunities.
Support community services that enhance quality of life and will retain existing residents and attract new ones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support the continued operation of the senior center and its services b. Support the operation of the County Library
Ensure that expenditures on roads used for recreational and administrative access to State and Federal lands are efficient and cost-effective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Develop a partnership with State and Federal agencies to help facilitate the funding of maintenance of roads used to access public lands.

Housing

Housing is a basic need for all residents of the County. Safe, affordable housing is necessary for residents to prosper and contribute to the well-being of the County. Therefore, the County will facilitate the development of additional affordable, safe and sound housing.

Goals	Objectives
Improve housing options and encourage the construction of safe, new housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure homebuilders and developers contact the County Sanitarian and Planning Board for guidance on subdividing land and building. b. Ensure housing has drinking water and wastewater treatment meeting County sanitation rules.
Renovate or remove aged, dilapidated and nuisance housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Pursue grant funding and other programs assist in the removal of vacant and/or nuisance housing. b. Renovate existing housing through grant funding and/or temporary County tax incentives.
Improve housing options for seniors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Encourage the development of an assisted or independent living center in Terry.
Facilitate the provision of affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide clear information on the process for building homes or creating subdivisions. b. Minimize regulations and bureaucracy to encourage people to relocate to Terry and Prairie County. c. Support the acquisition of grants and funding to construct housing.

Land Use

To prosper, Prairie County must attract new residents and businesses. In addition, the large amounts of public land in the County should be transformed into an economic asset, rather than continuing to be a burden. The protection of private property rights should also be paramount when decisions are made with regards to land use.

Goals	Objectives
Combat the spread of noxious weeds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Educate residents about weeds and the options available to address them. b. Educate recreationists, visitors and sportsman about noxious weeds to limit their spread. c. Federal and State governments should contribute a proportionate share of resources to combat noxious weeds.
Federal and State land use decisions in the County should improve the quality of life of residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure coordinating status with Federal and State agencies b. Ensure that Federal and State lands provide substantial economic benefits.
Encourage land uses that maximize economic activity and generate additional tax revenues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Encourage higher economic output and higher tax revenues from public and private lands.
Ensure that “multiple use” is a core principle for the management of public lands in the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Agricultural operations shall always be considered a “multiple use” on public lands. b. Federal and State management plans shall conform to the guidance found in the County Growth Policy.
Protect the property rights, customs and culture of County residents and maintain local control of land use and regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Federal and State agencies shall have no authority over local land use other than what is provided for in State and Federal statute. b. Management plans for Federal and State lands shall not govern land use on private lands. c. Private property shall not be designated open space without written consent of a property owner.
Maintain and enhance agricultural operations within the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Protect grazing rights on public lands. b. Support an effective right to farm ordinance.

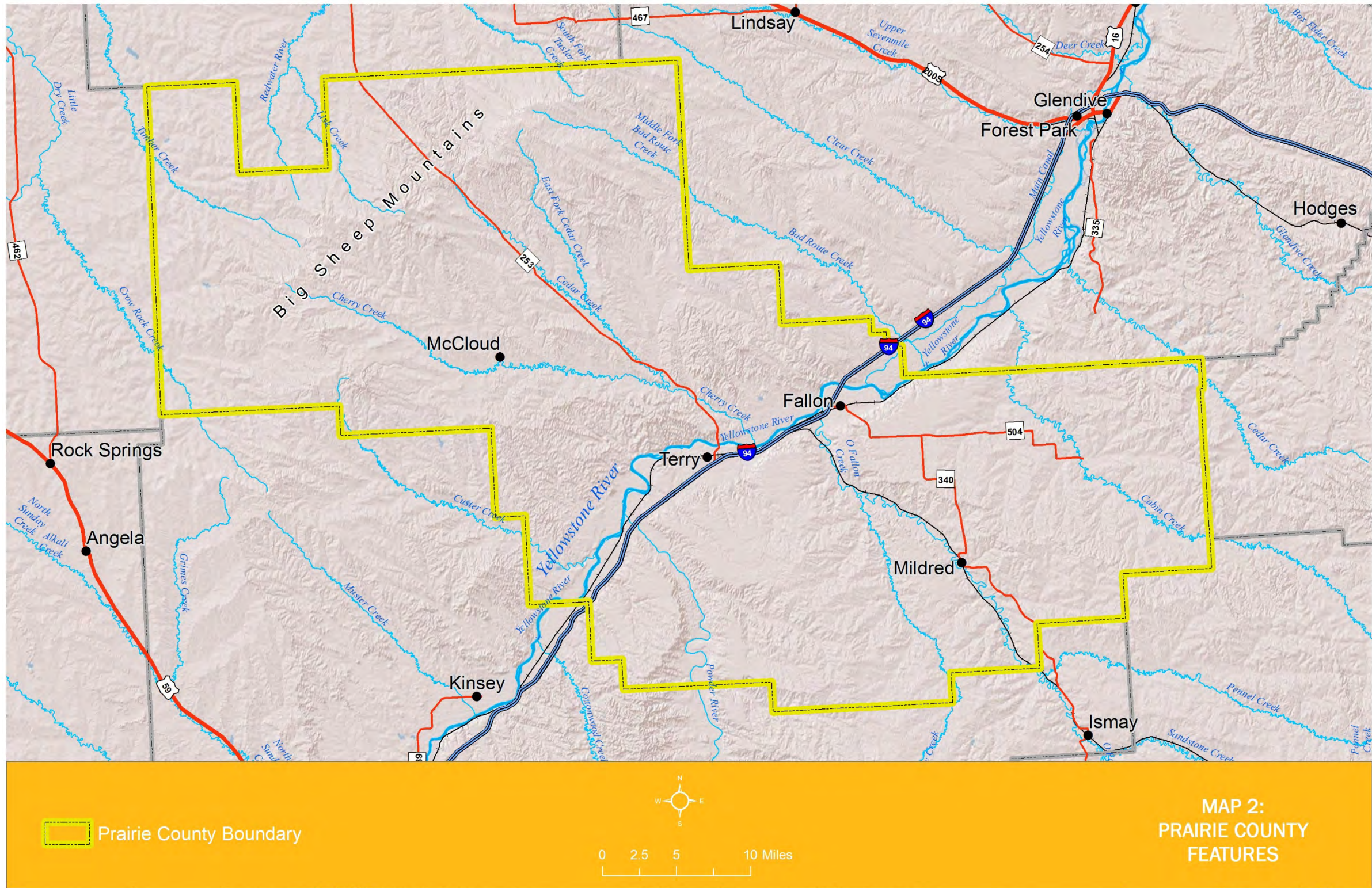
Natural Resources

The long-term and responsible use of the County’s natural resources is essential to the economic success of the County’s residents, including but not limited to grazing, mineral extraction, and water for irrigation and recreation.

Goals	Objectives
Encourage Federal and State agencies to assist the private sector in the development of minerals and other natural resources on public and private lands in an environmentally and socially responsible manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify ways to minimize Federal and State regulations to the development of natural resources. b. Support Federal and State management plans that provide for the long-term availability and responsible development of mineral resources.
Maintain and protect existing water rights and reservations within the County.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Transfer of any water rights should be carefully considered in relation to the history, traditions, and culture of the County. b. Promote opportunities for the development of water-based recreation without jeopardizing agricultural operations or water rights.
Conserve and protect water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assess alternative uses of water resources in the County, including but not limited to recreation and hydroelectric power. b. Federal/State/County/Private agencies shall work with the County Conservation District(s) to promote conservation of water resources. c. Ensure water quantity and quality in the County while maintaining economic growth and viability.

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Map 2 - County Features



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INTRODUCTION

Location

Prairie County is located in eastern Montana and shares common boundaries with other Montana counties including Custer, Dawson, Fallon, Garfield, McCone and Wibaux.

Geography



Badlands outside of Terry

The topography of the County is primarily bench-lands, valleys, and coulees with some very rugged badland areas. Elevations in Prairie County vary from 2,100 feet to 3,260 feet. Major waterways located in the County include the Yellowstone River and the Powder River and their tributaries. The Yellowstone River spans approximately 671 miles of Montana and is the principal tributary of the upper Missouri River. The Yellowstone runs the length of the County from

southwest to northeast and is a vital source of both ground and surface water for the residents of the County. The river provides irrigation water for crops and drinking water for livestock as well as providing recreation for residents and tourists. The Powder River spans approximately 375 miles from northeast Wyoming through southeast Montana, where it flows into the Yellowstone River in the County. Many other creeks and streams are located in the County and are invaluable to this fairly arid region.

Climate

The climate of the County is considered “Continental,” with cold and dry winters, cool and damp springs and falls and hot and dry summers. There are exceptions to this description. “Chinooks” can interrupt cold winter weather causing warm periods and snow dissipation. A Chinook is a warm dry wind that blows along the east side of the Rocky Mountains which can aid ranchers. The Chinooks can melt snow and open the ranges for winter feeding and ease the burden of calving season. Another exception are the Arctic cold fronts that move down from Canada and bring extremely cold weather, snow, and winds. Temperatures during these events may reach lows of -20 to -40 degrees.

The average daily high and low temperatures for the Town of Terry from 1981 to 2015 are displayed below.

PRAIRIE COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

(1981-2015)	Average Daily Temperatures
January	High: 29.7 degrees F
	Low: 4.4 degrees F
July	High: 88 degrees F
	Low: 55.6 degrees F

Western Regional Climate Center

As one can see, Prairie County’s climate can experience extremes, but overall it is generally mild and dry. The average length of the growing season in the County is about 110 days in the upland above the Yellowstone River and about 130 days in the river valley. The frost-free period ranges from 105 to 125 days. The average annual precipitation in Prairie County ranges from 10 to 14 inches. The majority of precipitation falls from April 1st - September 30th, with May and June being the wettest months.

Landownership

Prairie County contains 1,101,264 acres of land. Of that, 576,320- acres are privately owned and 577,725 are publicly owned. Ownership of public lands is held primarily by two entities, the Bureau of Land Management and the State of Montana.

Land Ownership in the County (Acres)		
Private Ownership	576,320	52.3%
Federal Lands	447,920	40.7%
State of Montana	77,024	7.0%

U.S. Geological Survey, Gap Analysis Program. 2012.

Protected Areas Database of the United States (PADUS) version 1.3

With regards to federal lands in the County, the vast majority are what is commonly known as Bankhead-Jones lands. These are formerly privately-owned farm and ranch lands that were purchased during the Great Depression by the Federal government under the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of 1937. These lands were originally patented under various agricultural laws, but did not prove economical enough to support a family during the Depression. Upon purchase by the Federal government, they were generally retired from use for cultivated agriculture and are managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) mainly for grazing livestock. There are approximately 93,450 acres of designated BLM lands and approximately 354,470 acres of Bankhead-Jones lands.

The large percentage of public land ownership has significant impacts upon the County, particularly from an economic standpoint. These lands are managed under rules and regulations created in either Helena, Montana or Washington, D.C., which do not necessarily have the same priorities as the residents of the County. In addition, the rules are generally not formulated to benefit the County.

Vegetation

The predominant vegetation type in the County is grassland, which covers approximately 947,087 acres and accounts for 86.0 percent of the total land cover by area. Mixed cropland comprises 88,101 acres of land, including irrigated and dryland crops and shrub land (sagebrush-grasses) which cover 33,038 acres.

Communities

There are currently three communities in Prairie County: Terry, Fallon, and Mildred. The Town of Terry has a population of approximately 591 (2014) and is the only incorporated municipality in the County. Terry is also the County seat. The Town prepared and adopted a Growth Policy in 2013.



Fallon is considered one of the oldest communities along the Yellowstone River and during the 1890s one of the largest stock shipping points in the world. Fallon's current population, including the surrounding area is listed at about 164 (2010) residents.

Mildred is located southeast of Terry and was a community created and developed by the Milwaukee Railroad as a water and coaling station. When the railroad's locomotives changed from coal fired steam to diesel/electric, they no longer needed Mildred's water and coal supplies system which triggered a decline in population. The development of Interstate 94 also contributed to this decline.

History

Prior to the expedition of Lewis and Clark (1804-1806), trappers and mountain men came to present day Montana to trap, hunt and trade with the Indians. Before white settlement, Prairie County was considered the country of the Crow Tribe, which extended from the Black Hills, north to the Missouri River and west of the present-day City of Billings. The Crow were pushed into the area by white settlers further to the east. In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson

acquired the Louisiana Territory (Louisiana Purchase) from France. This expanse of land extended west from the Mississippi River and included most of present-day Montana. To find out more about the region, Jefferson appointed Meriwether Lewis and William Clark as leaders of an expedition to travel to the Pacific Ocean. Lewis and Clark made the first systematic exploration of Montana and passed eastward through present-day Prairie County area in July 1806 on their return journey. Upon Lewis and Clark's return to St. Louis, and amid their glowing reports about the resources of the region, many fur-trading companies were formed and ventured into the area.

The American Fur Company established the Fort Union trading post on Montana's present eastern border in 1828 and then continued up the Missouri River to establish Fort Benton. Established in 1847, Fort Benton was an important trade and navigation center and is Montana's oldest permanent white settlement.

During the 1860s and 1870s, the Indian wars of the northern Great Plains began. In the mid-to-late 1800s, the United States Army established cavalry posts at Fort Keogh in Miles City and Fort Custer in Hardin. Riverboats hauled supplies from St. Louis up the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers and men such as Captain Marsh hauled military supplies for generals such as: Alfred H. Terry, George A. Custer, Nelson A. Miles, and Myles W. Keogh.

The Northern Pacific Railroad began surveying and constructing a trans-continental route during the 1870s. The rail-line through Montana was completed in 1883, thus making it practical for permanent settlement by homesteaders. The Milwaukee Railroad was constructed through the County in 1908 and operated in Montana until 1980.

When the Territory of Montana was formed, it was necessary to divide it into counties. The First Territorial Legislature established nine counties and seven more were added before the territory became the forty-first State in 1889. Prairie County was formed in 1915 from parts of current Dawson and Custer Counties.

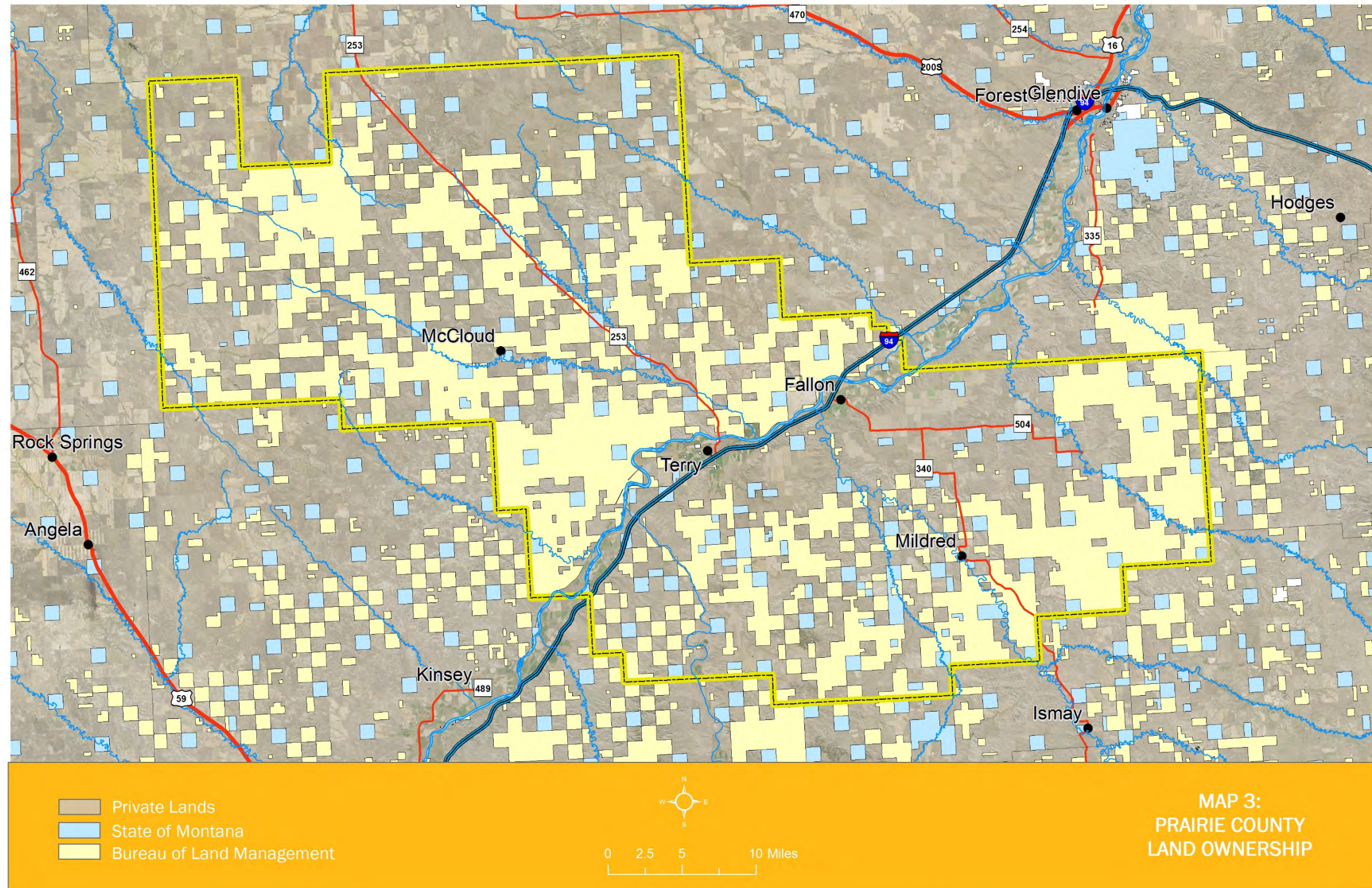
The homesteading era of the County began during the early 1900s and brought numerous settlers to the area. Open range was fenced and large herds of wildlife gave way to wheat fields and individual farms and ranches. Homesteaders in the region were tough people and maintained a simple lifestyle by living off the land, helping each other in time of emergency, and providing their own entertainment. Rodeos, brandings, roping contests and neighborhood dances continue to be popular in Prairie County today.

Although the Great Depression and Dustbowl years of the 1930s drove many people from the County; sons and daughters of some homesteaders remained to farm and ranch. Thus, people take great pride in their fortitude, land and heritage. Following World War II, mechanization allowed farms and ranches to grow larger through leasing and purchases. Today the remaining operations are large enough to withstand the forces of nature and the realities of national and global economics.

Western culture is a way of life in Prairie County. There is a love of the land and stewardship that will extend to future generations. Resident's express their culture through a love of the land, horses, rodeos and neighborliness. Hunting, fishing, and agate hunting are very important to the County's residents. This is a way of life that has survived the drought years and the coldest winters, and will continue for the intrepid and resourceful people of Prairie County. The character of this land and its people are indeed unique.

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Map 3 - Landownership



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POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Prairie County’s population peaked in 1930 when an estimated 3,941 people lived in there. In the subsequent decade of the Great Depression, the County experienced a significant decline in population, down to 2,410 people by 1940. From 1940 to 1960, the population of the County was relatively stable, but after 1960, the number of people steadily declined. That being said, since 2006 the County has seen a modest increase in population from 1,098 to an estimated 1,160 persons in 2015.

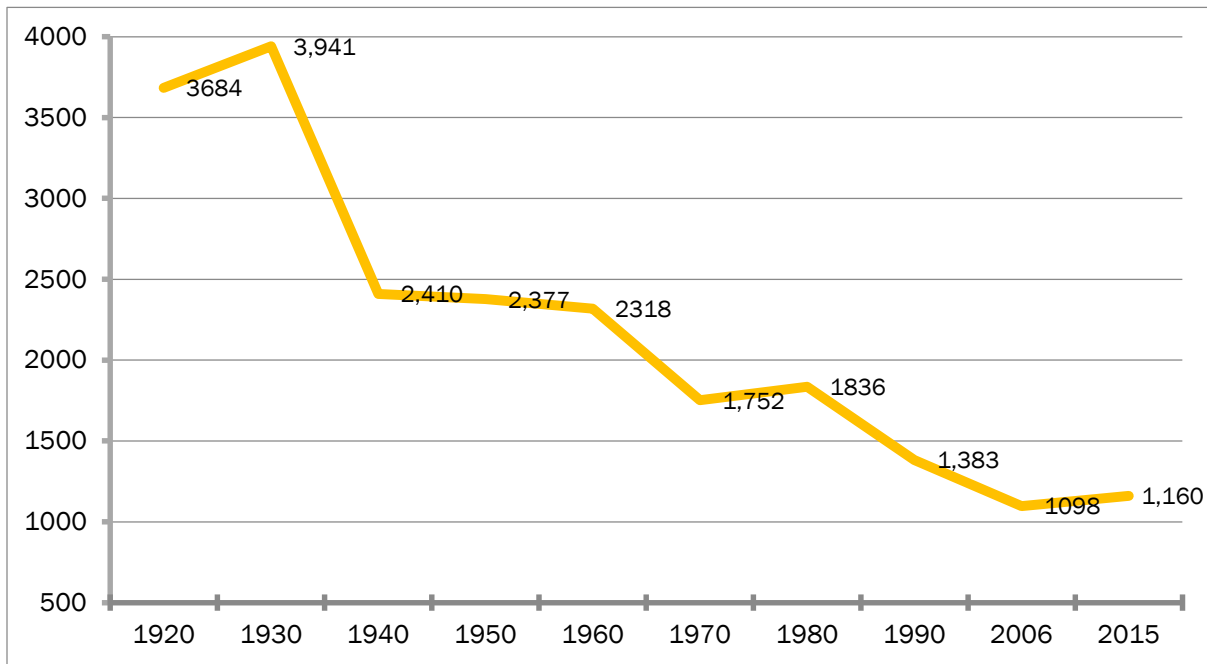


Figure 1 - Population Trends, Prairie County-1920-2015
(Census Bureau, 2015 Washington, D.C.)

Since 2006, many of the neighboring counties have also experienced changes in population, primarily due to the development of oil resources in the Bakken. Most of the neighboring counties grew in population, with McCone County being the only exception in that it lost population during the oil boom.

Despite an increase in the number of residents over the last 12-years, the County’s population is aging, a situation seen in many eastern Montana counties and throughout the United States. The median age of the population in the County increased from 48.9 in 2000 to 53.7 in 2014. The median age for the United States as a whole was 37.4 in 2014.



Population Change in Prairie and Surrounding Counties: 2006-2014				
	1980 Population	2006 Population	2014 Population	Percent Change '06-'14
Custer	13,109	11395	12092	6.0%
Dawson	11,805	8853	9518	7.5%
Fallon	3,763	2722	3108	14%
Garfield	1,656	1233	1309	6%
McCone	2,702	1756	1694	-3%
Prairie	1,836	1098	1148	4.5%
Wibaux	1,476	984	1121	14%

Census & Economic Information Center, MT Department of Commerce, June 2013 (www.ceic.mt.gov) and Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014 Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps)

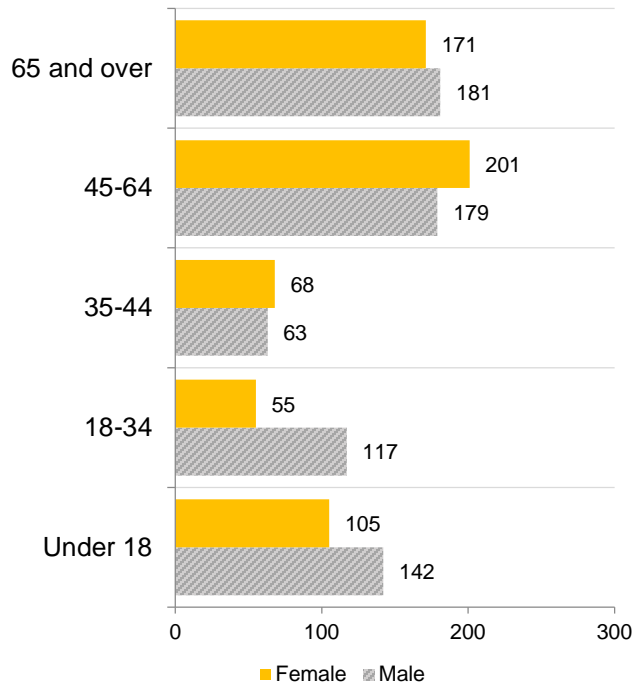


Figure 2 - Age Breakout by Gender for Prairie County, 2014
 (Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014 Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps))

Another trend facing Prairie County and one again familiar to other eastern Montana counties is that the age group, of 35-44 year olds, has declined from 152 persons in 2000 to 131 in 2014, an almost 16 percent decline in that age group. The decline in this age bracket seems

to indicate that a large proportion of middle-aged working adults have left the County to work and live elsewhere. In general, this age group is the core component of any community’s work force and critical to economic success. It will be important to identify ways to attract younger people back to the County.

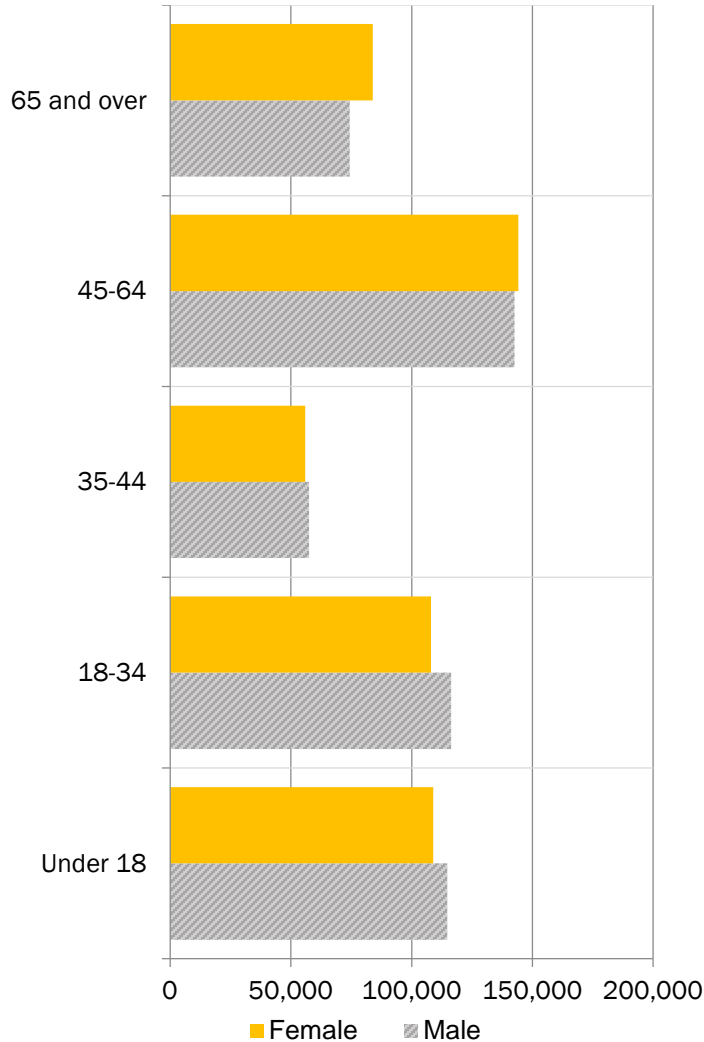


Figure 3 - Age Breakout by Gender for Montana, 2014
 (Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014 Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics’ Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps))

Regardless of recent population growth, an increase in the average age of residents and potential decrease in the number of working age people should be something that the County and the Town of Terry monitor closely. For example, further increases in a senior population could dramatically affect the County’s ability to provide healthcare and senior services, particularly without a corresponding increase in working age residents.

Many factors have influenced the population of the County, but most have been economic in nature. For example, there is the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The CRP is a Federal agricultural program that is designed to pay agricultural producers to not farm their land in order to provide wildlife habitat, and reduce soil erosion. This idling of land had the effect of shrinking the County’s economy by reducing the amount of cultivated land therefore the need for agricultural supplies and equipment and limited options for younger or beginning producers.

Through the late 1990’s and early to mid-2000’s the County averaged over 40,000 acres of land in CRP, but this has been changing. In 2006, Prairie County had approximately 42,308 acres of ground in CRP, by 2014 that number had been reduced to 18,670 acres. Nonetheless, well intended government programs can have unintended economic consequences of reducing the County’s population and should be thoroughly examined before they are implemented.

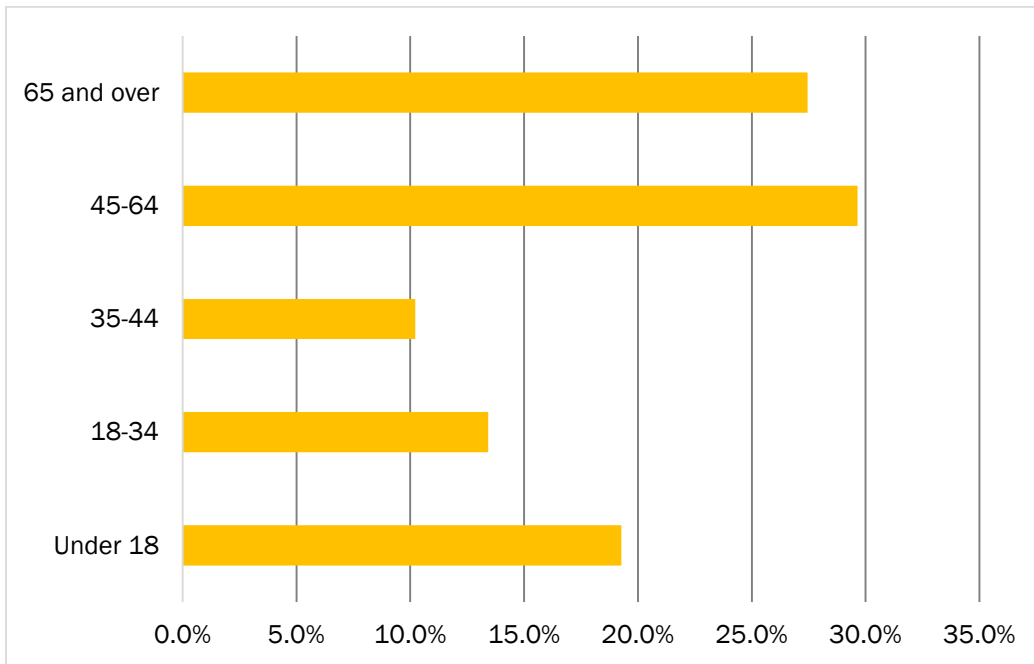


Figure 4 - Age Breakout by Percentage for Prairie County, 2014
 (Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2014 Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics’ Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps))

Population Trends:

Population projections developed in 2013, by Regional Economic Models, Inc. on behalf of the Census and Economic Information Center at the Montana Department of Commerce indicated that by 2015, Prairie County should have added upwards of 130 residents and had a population of approximately 1,291 persons. In fact, the estimated population only grew by 62 persons in 2015 and was approximately 1,160 residents per the Census Bureau.

The estimates done by Regional Economic Models, Inc. were made during the height of the Bakken oil boom when eastern Montana was seeing relatively intense residential and commercial development to support oil production. With this in mind, population growth in Prairie County will be modest at best for the foreseeable future, unless significant natural resource development occurs in or near the County. In fact, maintaining the exist population of the County and attracting new residents is a key objective of the County.

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ECONOMY

Agriculture

Agriculture has long been the primary economic driver in Prairie County, but that is changing.



In 2014, the industry was the largest employer in the County, with 187 persons engaged in agricultural operations. Cash receipts from agricultural operations was almost \$35.8 million with \$20.4 million from livestock and almost \$15.4 million from crops, with the remaining balance from other income sources.

Seventy-five to eighty percent (75 - 80%) of farm and ranch jobs and their associated income belong to

owner-operators, not paid laborers. This is a situation that has remained relatively consistent since the 1970's. Unfortunately, farm and ranch earnings have declined over that same period, dropping from \$10.3 million (adjusted for inflation) in 1970 to \$4.6 million (adjusted for inflation) in 2014.

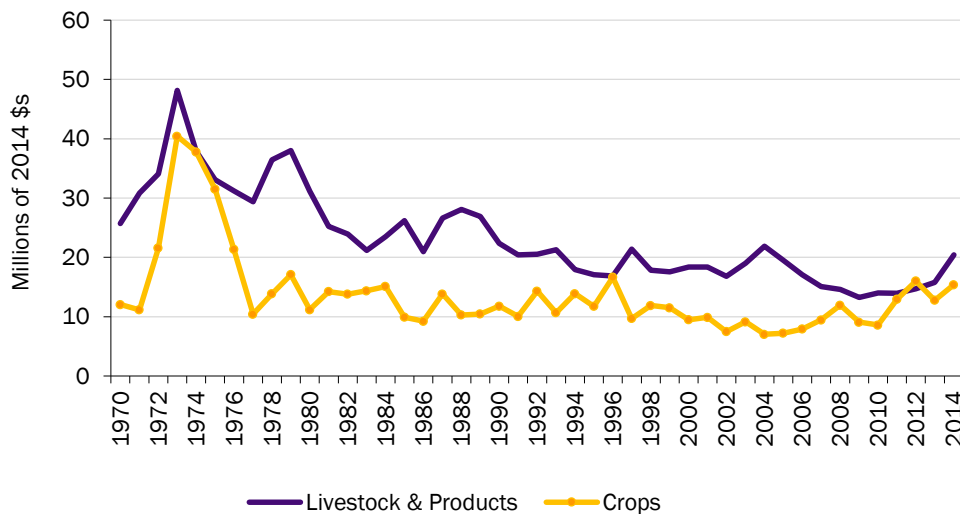


Figure 5 - Cash Receipts from Agriculture in Prairie County 1970-2013
 U.S. Department of Labor. 2013. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps).



Sugar Beet Field

Other than an anomaly that occurred during the Arab oil embargo and Russian crop failure in the early 1970s, cash receipts from the sale of crops in the County have remained relatively stable over the four plus decades, growing from \$12 million in 1970 to \$15.4 million in 2014. With regards to livestock, cash receipts have declined from \$25.7 million (adjusted for inflation) in 1970 to \$20.4 million (adjusted for inflation) in 2014. Despite this, in 2015, it was estimated that 32,500

head of cattle were raised in Prairie County, which ranked the County 33rd in cattle production.

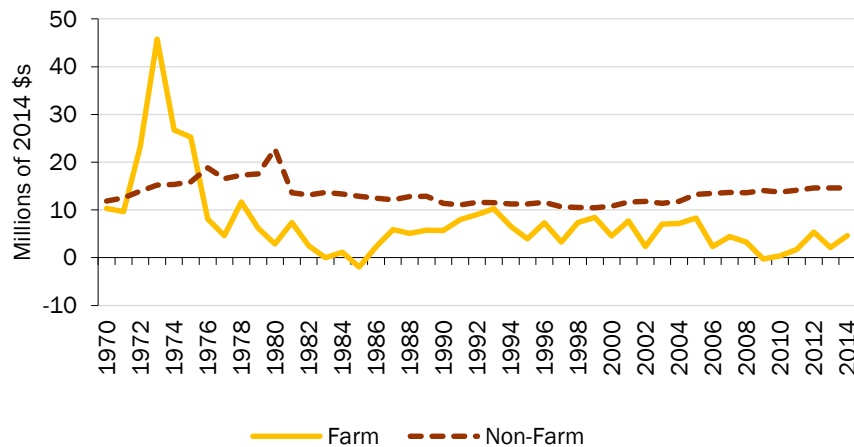


Figure 6 - Farm and Non-Farm Earnings 1970-2014

U.S. Department of Labor. 2014. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps).

Top County Employers

The three main industries that employ County residents are those that are non-service related farming, services related (i.e. retail trade, transportation, health care, accommodations and food service) and government (local, state and Federal). Based upon data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) at the U.S. Department of Commerce, in 2014 the breakdown of employment in Prairie County by broad industry was as follows:

- Non-service jobs (farm): 187
- Services: 304
- Government: 167

Following trends seen nationally, the number of service jobs in the County has risen dramatically. According to the BEA, service jobs made up 154 or 24.3 percent of the jobs in the County in 2001. By 2014, that had risen to 304 or 33.8 percent of the jobs in the County.

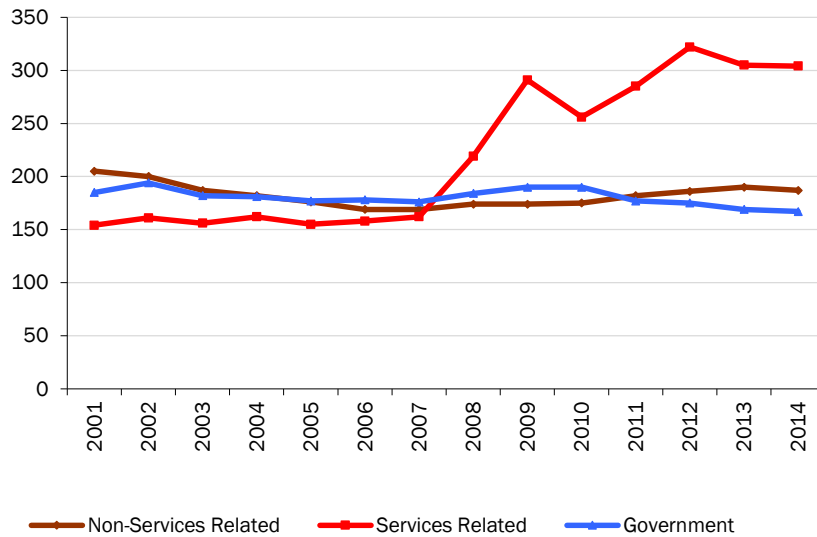


Figure 7 - Employment by Major Industries in Prairie County 2001-2014
 U.S. Department of Labor. 2014. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps).

Service Sector

While agriculture continues to provide the largest share of jobs in Prairie County, service sector jobs (accommodations, healthcare, retail, etc.) have provided a greater share of income in the County. Since 2001, jobs in the service related economy have increased from 154 to 304 in 2014 and earnings from service related industries grew from \$2.9 million in 2001 to \$3.3 million in 2014, a 16 percent increase.

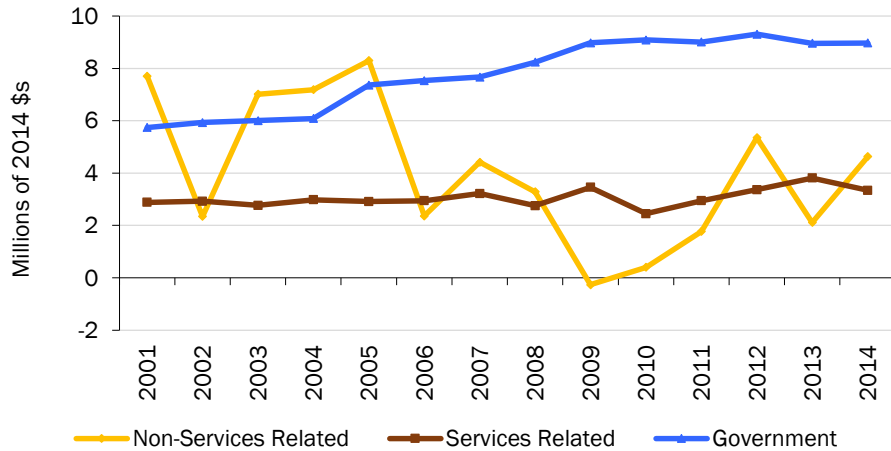


Figure 8 - Earnings by Major Industries in Prairie County 2001-2014
 U.S. Department of Labor. 2014. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps).

Government Employment

While the total number of government jobs in the County has declined over the years, the remaining government jobs, particularly federal government jobs, have become increasingly important from an economic standpoint. The number of government jobs have steadily declined from 185 in 2001 to 167 in 2014, a 10 percent decline, but at the same time the earnings for those government jobs dramatically increased from \$5.7 million in 2001 to \$9 million in 2014, a 56 percent increase.

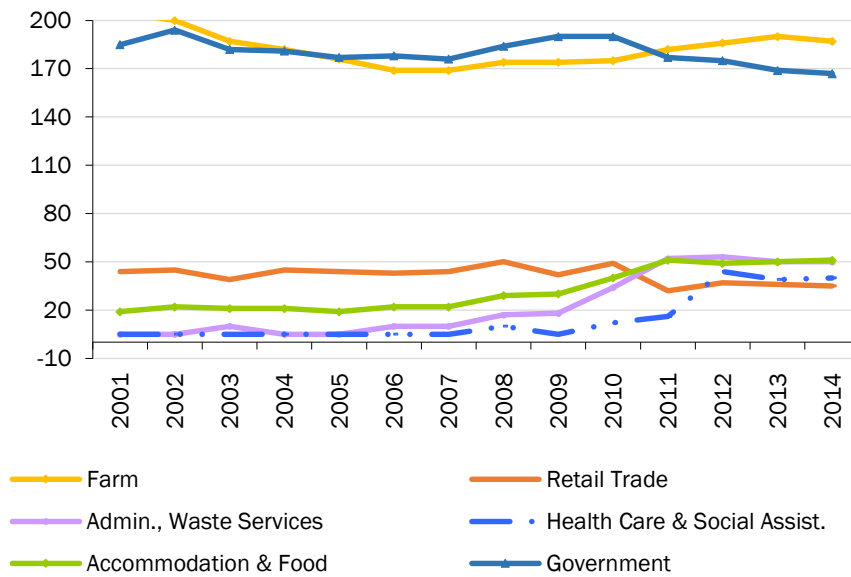


Figure 9 - Top Employment Sectors in Prairie County 2001-2014
 U.S. Department of Labor. 2014. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps).

Income and Poverty Levels

When trying to understand the economy it is important to understand how people’s income and earnings have changed over time. According to Census data, from 1990 to 2014, average earnings per job in the County shrank from \$26,167 to \$21,409 (in real terms), an eighteen percent decrease. Average earnings is a measure of the compensation of the average job and it is calculated by dividing total earnings by total employment. The calculation counts full-time and part-time jobs with equal weight.

Conversely, from 1990 to 2014, per capita income in the County grew from \$26,868 to \$36,835, a 37 percent increase. Per capita income is a measure of income per person from both labor and non-labor sources. In 2015, the per capita income for the entire state of Montana was \$41,280.

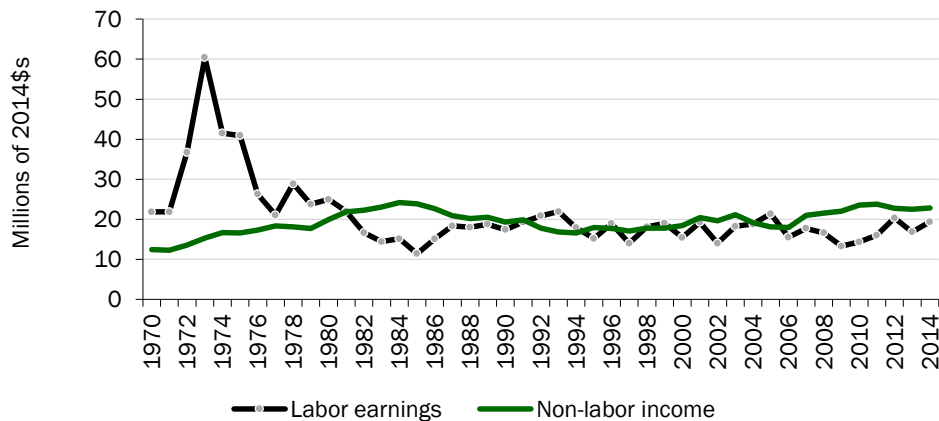


Figure 10 - Personal Income in Prairie County 1970-2014
 U.S. Department of Labor. 2014. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics’ Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps).

Earnings and Non-Labor Income

Earnings from labor sources in the County have been relatively stable since 1970. However, since 2000, income from non-labor sources such as dividends, interest, rent and Social Security payments have replaced labor earnings as the primary source of personal income in the County. This situation may reflect the aging of the County’s population which as mentioned early went from a median age of 48.9 in 2000 to 53.7 in 2014.

With regards to non-labor income, Prairie County appears to have a healthy mix of investment income and Social Security. Unlike many other counties in the State, residents are not becoming dependent on hardship payments. As the population ages, the County’s dependence on Social Security payments will continue to increase, but that is typical and not necessarily a problem.

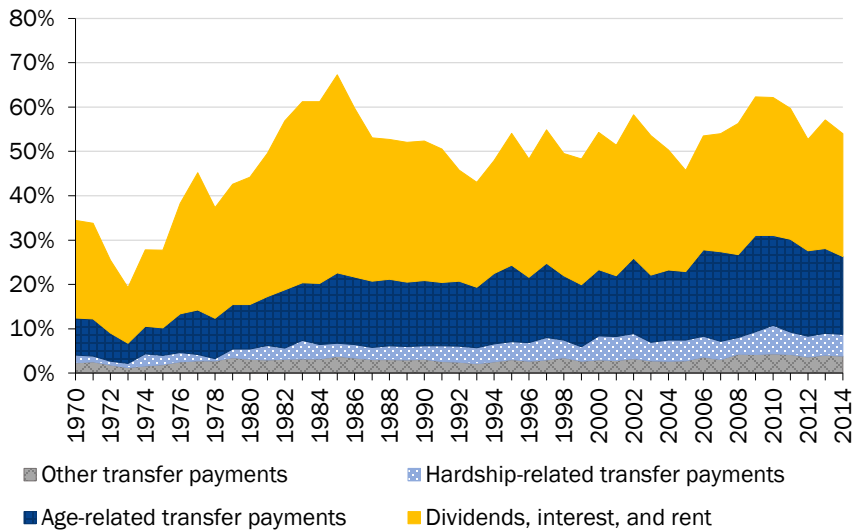


Figure 11 - Non-Labor Income in Prairie County 1970-2014
 U.S. Department of Labor. 2014. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps).

Agricultural Payments

Agricultural producers in the County received \$66.2 million in Federal subsidies between 1995 and 2014. The program with the largest payment over that timeframe was the Conservation Reserve Program, which paid out \$26.8 million to participating producers.

Agricultural Subsidy Payments 2008 and 2014			
Program	Number of Producers	2008 Payments	2014 Payments
Conservation Reserve Program	77	\$1,317,882	\$452,972
Wheat Subsidies	157	\$976,790	\$200,262
Disaster Payments	159	\$474,739	\$120,336
Livestock Subsidies	131	\$239,310	\$120,231
Corn Subsidies	70	\$117,865	\$33,844

Environmental Working Group, <https://farm.ewg.org/>, 2016

Over all subsidy payments to producers in the County declined over 70 percent between 2008 and 2014.

Tourism

Tourist and recreational opportunities abound in Prairie County and those opportunities are generally associated with the County's public land and the Yellowstone River. People come to the area to fish, hike, take photographs and to hunt. In addition, the Lewis and Clark Trail runs through the County along the Yellowstone River and is considered a "special land use area" due to its historical value. The County also has numerous historical sites and Native American digs, and Big Sheep Mountain the highest point in the County.



Old Milwaulkee Bridge

The financial contribution of tourism and recreation to the County's economy is significant. According to the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana, non-residents spent a total of \$1,122,666 in Prairie County from 2012 to 2014.

The Yellowstone River provides access to fishing, birdwatching and photographic opportunities. The River also attracts recreationists for the chance to find a treasured Yellowstone Agate. Agates from the River have provided a source of income for some

area residents, who make jewelry and sell it in local stores. Agate hunting also provides a source of entertainment and enjoyment for Prairie County residents and is considered a valuable part of the local heritage and culture.

Prairie County contains 577,725 acres of public land, most of which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and significant portions of which are accessible to the public. The BLM manages significant resources in the County for recreational purposes. These include:

- **Terry Badlands:** The badlands contain the Calypso Trail, Calypso Bridge and Scenic View. Activities in the badlands include hiking, bicycling on specifically designated travel routes, hunting, photography, birding, horseback riding and wildlife viewing.
- **Powder River Depot:** The Depot was located at the confluence of the Powder and Yellowstone rivers, southwest of Terry. Established by General Alfred Terry, it supported the campaigns of the Sioux War of 1876. Lt. Colonel George Armstrong Custer and his 7th Cavalry stopped to rest and resupply at the Powder River Depot prior to their defeat at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. The area which has an access road contains grave markers and appears much as it did in 1876.
- **Terry Open OHV (Off-Highway Vehicles) Area:** This is an intensive OHV use area of approximately 110 acres. There are no facilities, designated trails or water available at this site.

The Terry Badlands Wilderness Study Area is located north of the Yellowstone River northwest of Terry. A gravel road off of Montana State Highway 253 provides access to the Terry Scenic View and the northern and eastern sides of the area. The Calypso Trail, a dirt jeep trail provides access to the western and eastern sides of the area. Rains, which are



Scenic View Road

common in spring and summer, make many of the roads impassable. The topography of the badlands is typical of the area and extends from the northern bank of the Yellowstone River, rising in elevation to the northern boundary of the wilderness study area. Deeply incised, dry canyons with little vegetation drain southward into the Yellowstone River. Elevations in the area range from 2,196 feet along the Yellowstone River to 2,920 feet at the northwestern corner of the area.

The County boasts a significant warm water fishery, particularly in the

Yellowstone and Powder Rivers. Some commonly fished for species are pike, sauger, walleye, bass, catfish, sturgeon, carp, and crappie. In addition, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks stocks some of the reservoirs in the County with fish. Waterbodies that are stocked include:

- Clarks Reservoir–4000 Rainbow Trout (2016)
- Homestead Reservoir–Northern Pike (Unknown)
- Silvertip Reservoir–1000 Rainbow Trout (2016)

Hunting is a very popular in Prairie County for residents and non-residents alike. The area produces significant populations of antelope, deer, elk, sharp-tailed grouse, gray partridge, pheasant, turkey, geese and ducks. Every hunting season, hunters flock to the area. They help to support the local economy of Terry and Fallon by buying gas, groceries, lodging and shopping at stores.

Hunting is also important for the County’s agricultural operations as a method for controlling big game and bird populations. This is particularly true when the numbers of deer, antelope and birds are high enough that they have a negative impact upon the operations of local farmers and ranchers.

Many of the County’s farmers and ranchers are enrolled in the Block Management Program administered by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. This program assists landowners in managing hunting activities on lands under their control and provides hunters with hunting access to private lands and isolated public land free of charge. Landowner participation in block management is voluntary and contracts are negotiated annually with

the Department. Block management in Prairie County in 2016 included 24 cooperating landowners and covered 347,157 acres of private land.

The Town of Terry has its own attractions, which include the Prairie County Museum and the Lady Cameron Gallery. The Lady Cameron Gallery displays the photographic work of Lady Evelyn Cameron, a pioneer woman who moved to the area in the late 1800's and documented life in the area through her photography. There are also several local retail stores in Town, which provide visitors with the option to go shopping and enjoy a cup of coffee.

Federal Land Payments

Prairie County receives payments from the Federal government in order to compensate for the non-taxable federal lands within its borders, primarily lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Payments to the County are funded by Federal appropriations payments in lieu of taxes (PILT) and from receipts received by BLM from activities on the agency's lands (e.g., grazing, and minerals). There are two types of payments applicable to the County:

- Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT): These payments compensate Prairie County for the non-taxable BLM lands within its borders. PILT is based on a maximum per-acre payment reduced by the sum of all revenue sharing payments and currently subject to a population cap.
- BLM Revenue Sharing: The BLM shares a portion of receipts generated on public lands within Prairie County within the county, including grazing fees through the Taylor Grazing Act. 40 percent of these revenues are paid to the County.

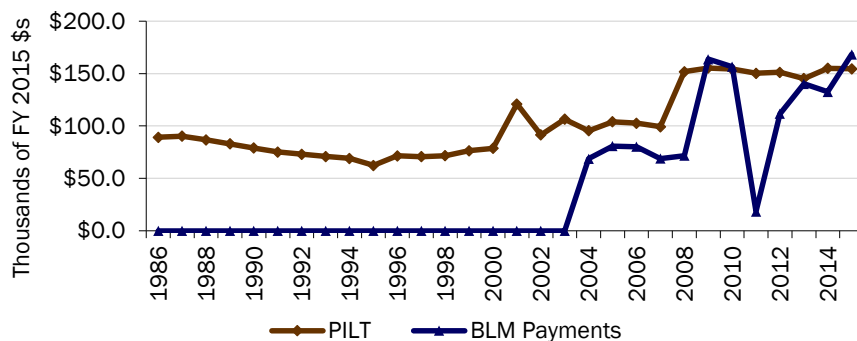


Figure 12 - Federal Land Payments to Prairie County 1986-2014

U.S. Department of Interior. 2016. Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of Interior. 2016. Bureau of Land Management, Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of Interior. 2016., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps).

In 2015, distribution of those payments was \$298,584 to the County and \$24,132 to grazing districts located in the County. The payments to the County were from the PILT program and

Bankhead-Jones program and the payments to the grazing districts are via the Taylor Grazing Act requirements.

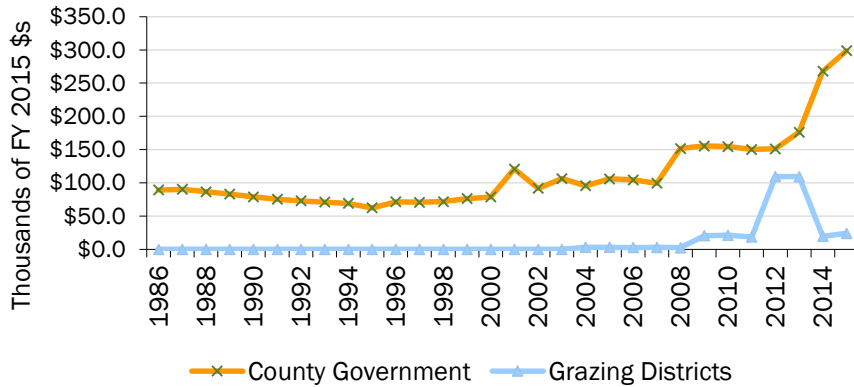


Figure 13 - Distribution of Federal Land Payments in Prairie County 1986-2014
 U.S. Department of Interior. 2016. Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), , Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of Interior. 2016. Bureau of Land Management, Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of Interior. 2016., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps).

Marketing the County and Town of Terry

Prairie County and the Town of Terry have advantages that could be used to attract new residents and businesses by marketing the area as an alternative home (bedroom community) for people living and working in both Glendive and Miles City. The Town of Terry has great services such as its schools and the hospital. It provides a high quality of life and very affordable housing and land versus both Glendive and Miles City area.

With regards to housing, according to the 2012 Housing White Paper developed by the Montana Department of Commerce the median cost of a single-family home in Prairie County in 2010 was \$36,000 while in Dawson County it was \$110,000 and in Custer County is was \$93,700. Bearing in mind that these were 2010 numbers, this was an almost \$74,000 and \$57,700 difference in the cost of a home between Prairie County and its neighbors. This is substantial if you are attempting to purchase a home, particularly your first home. In addition, the commuting time from Terry to both Glendive and Miles City is approximately 35 minutes, a relatively easy commute in this day and age.

Factors like services and home prices, coupled with its close proximity to Glendive and Miles City could make attracting new commuting residents a real possibility for the Prairie County and Terry. The County and the Town should work together to develop a marketing plan to achieve this.

Economic Trends

Agriculture is likely to remain a focal point of the County's economy, although this will largely be dependent upon long-term national and international market trends, which are difficult to predict. The number of service jobs is also likely to increase, mirroring the same trend nationally. This may be particularly true for jobs related to health and senior care if the County's population continues to age.

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LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

Providing services and maintaining infrastructure such as County roads in an effective and economical manner are a primary function of Prairie County. Services include but are not limited to providing law enforcement, emergency and senior services and weed control. Infrastructure that the County is responsible for runs the gamut from buildings, roads and bridges.

In order to provide these services and maintain infrastructure, the County must collect enough revenues. In 2014 the County generated a total of \$2,168,155 in revenues. The three largest sources of revenue in that year were from taxes and assessments (\$895,825), intergovernmental payments from the State and Federal governments (\$923,027) and charges for services (\$244,555).

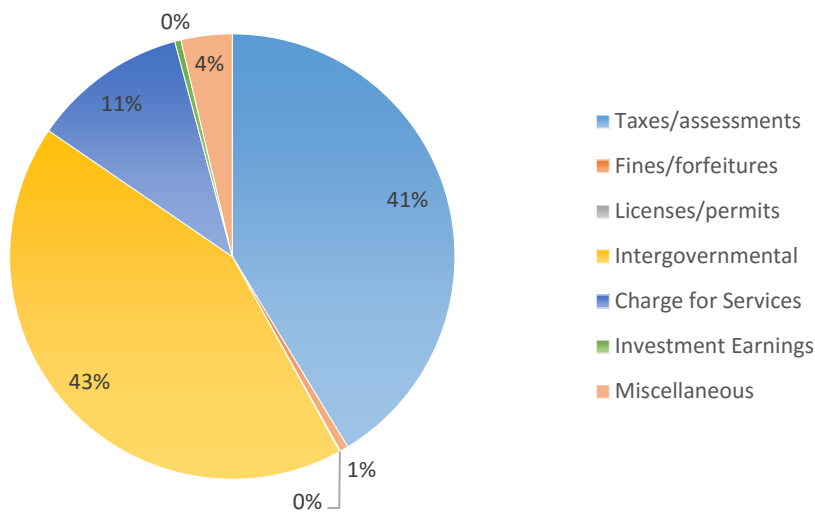


Figure 14 - County Revenues in 2014
 Financial Statements-Prairie County, Montana Department of Administration, Local Government Services Bureau 2014.

The majority of revenues for the County in 2014 were comprised of property taxes and intergovernmental payments such as PILT and oil production taxes. Oil production taxes collected by the County totaled \$313,626 while State allocated Federal mineral royalties brought in \$76,718.

The County’s main expenditures are for public works (roads and bridges), general government (Commissioners, County Attorney, Clerk etc.), capital projects and public safety (Sheriff etc.)

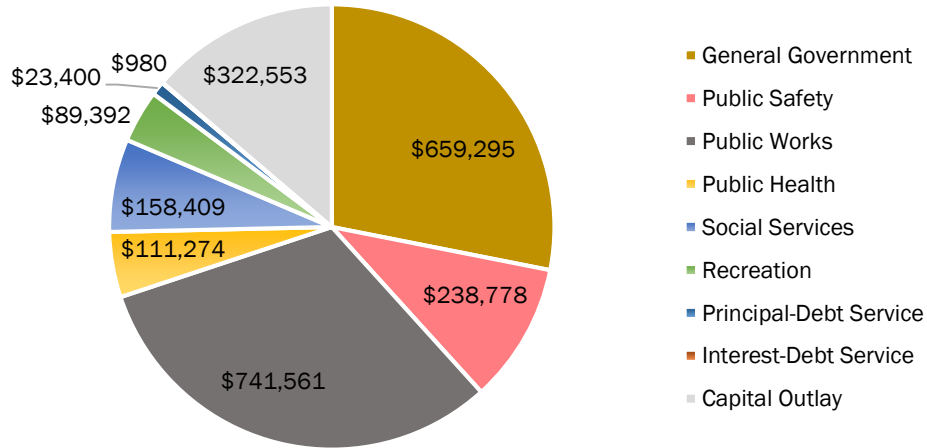


Figure 15 - County Expenditures in 2014
 Financial Statements-Prairie County, Montana Department of Administration, Local Government Services Bureau 2014.

The County does not currently have a capital improvements plan (CIP) addressing the operation and maintenance of its infrastructure. A CIP would be prioritized list of capital improvements, a schedule for completing the projects or purchasing equipment, and options for funding the construction or acquisition. While capital improvements are typically defined as infrastructure projects or equipment purchases, CIPs should also consider the operation and maintenance of infrastructure and equipment.

The CIP would assist the County with implementing the goals and objectives from the Growth Policy, and reflect the community’s priorities with regards to infrastructure. The CIP and Growth Policy should be collaborative as there is information in the Growth Policy that is useful to creating a CIP, and information in the CIP is useful for future updates of the Growth Policy.

A future CIP for the County should:

- Provide an ongoing inventory of existing infrastructure.
- Provide an evaluation of needs based on state and federal requirements and infrastructure deficiencies.
- Provide an opportunity for public input on infrastructure priorities.
- Provide a process for analyzing and prioritizing infrastructure projects.
- Identify potential project funding sources.

Infrastructure owned and maintained by the County includes:

- Roads
- Bridges

- County Fairgrounds and associated facilities
- Buildings including the airport, courthouse, law enforcement center, library and those housing the road and weed departments, and
- Buffalo Rapids Irrigation District infrastructure

Until such a plan is created, this chapter serves as the County’s strategy for the maintenance and replacement of its infrastructure.

Services and infrastructure are also provided to residents by the Town of Terry, local non-profit organizations such as Prairie Community Hospital and Prairie County Museum.

A comprehensive list of the services and infrastructure found in the County follows.

Airport

Prairie County has a public airstrip located a half a mile south of Terry across Interstate 94. The Prairie County Airport was established shortly after World War II and has been in operation since then. The airstrip is hard-surfaced with asphalt, approximately 4,450 feet long and can accommodate aircraft weighing 12,500 pounds or less. There is a lighted runway that can be turned on either through a radio frequency or manually. There are also seven airplane tie-downs and three private hangars available at the airport for the safety of aircraft. In 2000, the County Airport Board completed a comprehensive improvement project for the airport, consisting of reconstruction of the runway, taxiway and apron, and lighting.

Drinking Water

Prairie County has several County-owned buildings located in Terry, including the County Courthouse and Senior Center. All of them are served by groundwater wells. The Prairie County Fairgrounds is also served by a groundwater water well.

Domestic water elsewhere in the County is also obtained from groundwater wells which range in complexity from shallow dug wells along the creek valleys to deep drilled wells in the upland areas. Groundwater wells in the County are often highly mineralized.

Ground water in the County is in a variety of aquifers that are located in alluvial deposits or terrace deposits of sand and gravel, or in bedrock formation of sandstone, coal, fissile sandy shale, or baked clinker beds. The most significant ground water resources in Prairie County are alluvial deposits and terrace deposits along river valleys and in the inner valleys of most streams. The coarse deposits are the most permeable zones in the area.

Because groundwater resources are very critical to the well-being of County residents, any potential hydraulic fracturing done to recover oil or gas would need to be examined closely in order to prevent any negative impacts to groundwater.

Current information regarding ground water wells is available from the Groundwater Information Center website hosted by Montana Tech University in Butte:

<http://data.mbmgt.mtech.edu/mapper/mapper.asp?view=Wells&>

Emergency Medical Services

The Prairie County Ambulance Service provides coverage to entire County (approximately 1,731 square miles) and the service responds to an average of 80-100 call per year. The Service is licensed by the State of Montana as a Basic Life Support Service with Advanced Life Support Endorsements.

The Service is staffed by volunteers and currently has two ambulances. The ambulance service in Prairie County operates on user fees and contributions from the County and the Hospital District fund equipment replacement through a levy of one mill annually.

Fire Protection

Prairie County has four Fire Departments: The Prairie County Rural Fire Department, the Terry Volunteer Fire Department, the Cabin Creek Fire District, and the Fallon Fire District.

Outside Terry City limits, the County Rural Fire Department has the responsibility for protection of the balance of the County, which includes scattered homes, farms, railroad improvements, ranches, and oil and gas field facilities. The Fallon Fire District protects the Fallon area. The Cabin Creek Fire District protects the Cabin Creek area, which has 24 scattered homes, farmsteads and outbuildings, and dryland farming and pastureland. Fallon and Cabin Creek Fire Districts fund their own district through a tax levy assessed by each District. The County has mutual aid agreements with the surrounding counties, and Glendive and Miles City.

When a fire is located on Federal land, Bureau of Land Management personnel and resources will respond. When a fire occurs on State land, the Montana Department of Natural Resources Conservation provides equipment, aerial assistance, and acts as a liaison between local and Federal agencies on major fires.



Prairie Community Hospital

Medical Care

Prairie Community Hospital is a County owned medical facility. The hospital employs one full-time health nurse and provides comprehensive and secondary care, including inpatient, outpatient, and emergency care. The Hospital is currently licensed as a 21 bed Critical Access Hospital.

The hospital's certification as a Critical Access Hospital means that it receives cost-based reimbursement from the Medicare Program,

instead of standard fixed reimbursement rates that other hospitals receive. This type of reimbursement can enhance the financial performance of small rural hospitals and thus reduce hospital closures.

It is essential to the health and well-being of the County's residents that the facility and its services be maintained.

Law Enforcement

The Prairie County Department of Public Safety provides law enforcement services through the Sheriff. The Sheriff manages the Department and is the chief law enforcement agency in the County. His staff is comprised of two full-time officers, an administrative assistant and dispatch services provided via a contract with Fallon County.

The Department of Public Safety provides general law enforcement, court security, civil service, and search and rescue operations for the citizens of Prairie County in a service area of 1,730 square miles. Additionally, the Department provides law enforcement services to the Town of Terry via a contract. The Sheriff also serves as the County Fire Warden and provides many services not specifically required under statute including livestock/brand inspections, rural fire protection, concealed weapon permits and drug and violence education.

In order to provide the most effective and efficient law enforcement services to County residents, the County will do its utmost to coordinate such services with other local governments and state and Federal agencies.

Library

The Prairie County Library is located in Terry and has a mission to provide current information, and popular materials in a variety of formats for residents of the County. The library encourages the use of its collection and cooperates with other local, State and regional libraries in resource-sharing to more effectively meet the needs of its patrons. The library provides the following services:

- VHS and DVD movie rental
- Audio books on cassette and CD
- Public-use computers with high-speed Internet access
- Copy, scanning and fax service
- Online database for books and magazines
- Inter-library loan program
- Approximately 12,000 books available

Museums and Lady Cameron Gallery

The Prairie County Museum is located in downtown Terry and is housed in two former bank buildings. Other buildings the Museum manages include a caboose, former railroad depot, outhouse, homestead and the Lady Cameron Photo Gallery. The Museum provides a glimpse of an era gone by, showcasing homesteading, antique farm equipment, turn of the century cattle and sheep raising equipment, and tools.



Prairie County Museum

The Lady Cameron Gallery is located adjacent to the Museum and displays photographs and memorabilia from the life of Evelyn Cameron. Evelyn moved to the Prairie County area with her husband, Ewen, in the late 1800's and she produced an outstanding photographic record of eastern Montana during late 1800's and early 1900's.

Parks & Recreation

Recreational opportunities abound in Prairie County. Activities include:

- Boating on the Yellowstone
- Fishing
- Hunting
- Hiking
- Agate hunting
- Fair

Two major rivers (Yellowstone and Powder) and numerous streams are located in the County and are used for fishing during the spring, summer, and fall months. The County also contains some of the best big game and upland bird hunting in the State.



The County has approximately 577,725 acres of public land that is owned and managed by the Federal and State government. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages approximately 447,920 acres of this. A BLM Wilderness Study Area (WSA), the Terry Badlands WSA comprising 44,910 acres is located north of Terry. There are camping facilities in the WSA at Scenic View, which is located just northwest of Terry, and include a fire pit area and restroom facilities.

Clark Reservoir: The reservoir is located approximately 24 miles northwest of Terry and is regularly stocked with trout and has a campground and fishing access area.

Prairie County Fairgrounds: The fairgrounds are the site of the annual Prairie County Fair, which is known as "The Biggest Little Fair in All of Eastern Montana." The fairgrounds also offer facilities to host open house celebrations, gun shows, agriculture appreciation days, concerts, dances, graduation parties, rodeos, horse clinics, family reunions, demolition derbies, and 4-H events.



Fallon Park

Fallon Park: The park is located in the community of Fallon and is used for various gatherings for residents and visitors. The park property is currently owned by the County, but maintenance and preservation of the park's facilities done by the residents of Fallon on a volunteer basis.

Prairie County Manor

The Prairie County Manor is a County-owned building that is currently vacant. The Manor was originally the hospital in Terry and then was converted to a nursing home.

Repurposing the facility for other uses faces a number of challenges including the need to upgrade it to meet ADA access requirements and to provide adequate fire protection mechanisms such as fire sprinklers.

Senior Programs

Prairie County offers a wide variety of services to its Senior citizens including:



Senior Center

seniors Monday through Friday.

- Companion Program: Program links active senior volunteers with senior citizens for companionship and assistance with errands and other day to day activities.
- Homemaker: Program assists with light housekeeping and errands for seniors 60 and over.
- Personal Care: Program helps perform health-oriented tasks designed to keep people 60 years of age and older in their home. Assistance includes personal hygiene, grooming, bathing, monitoring blood pressure, and accompanying individuals to doctor appointments.

- Senior Center: Facility provide a place for seniors to socialize, dine and exercise on a regular basis.

- Commodity Supplemental Food Program: Program allows qualifying seniors to receive an approximately 40 lb. box of food each month.

- Congregate Meals: Shared meals are offered at the Senior Center every Tuesday and Thursday at noon.

- Meals on Wheels: Meals are delivered to the homes of eligible

Schools



Terry High School

Similar to most of Montana, the public schools in the County are a focal point of education as well as the social and cultural life for residents. Terry Public Schools is a County-wide school district, with classrooms for kindergarten through 12th grade located in Terry. Grades K-3 are located in the Bolin School, grades 4-8 are in the Grandey School, and grades 9-12 are in the Terry High School. During the 2015-2016 school year, there were 159 students in the District. According to the Montana Office of Public

Instruction, the student teacher ratio is 9:1 and according to the District, the average class size is 12.

Roads and Bridges

Interstate 94 is the primary road system crossing Prairie County in an east-west direction. Old Highway 10 runs adjacent to I-94 and through Terry. Highway 253 provides access to Terry from the north and intersects with Highway 200 at Brockway in McCone County. Highway 340 provides a connection between Terry and the communities of Mildred and Fallon.



The County has an extensive network of roads and bridges that it is responsible for maintaining. This is a formidable undertaking and of primary importance to farm and ranch residents. Well-maintained roads provide essential access for public services during times of severe weather. The County Road Department is the entity responsible for this work.

The Road Department has a staff of five employees who are responsible for maintaining approximately 750 miles of State secondary highways and gravel roads. In addition to road maintenance, the Department is responsible for all road signs, maintaining cattle guards and culverts, and mowing roughly 700 miles along County roads. There are also ten (10) bridges in the County that the Department is responsible for maintaining.

For a County with low taxable values, it is critical that the maintenance and replacement of roads and bridges be done in as a cost effective manner as possible. This situation is made even more challenging by the fact that the County has responsibility for maintaining the roads used to access substantial amounts of land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). County roads used to access BLM see particularly heavy use during the fall hunting season.

The County would like to develop a partnership with the Bureau of Land Management to identify sources of funding to help cover the costs of maintaining those roads and to ensure that those roads are safe and efficient.

Solid Waste

There are currently no solid waste facilities located in Prairie County other than a Class III landfill owned by the Town of Terry which is located approximately two miles west of the Town. The landfill only accepts compost and tree branches.

The Town is licensed to pick up rural residents' garbage. Locations for garbage pickup in the County include all points within five miles of Interstate 94 from the Custer County line through Prairie County to Interchange 198 (Crackerbox Route), southwest of Glendive. Solid waste is then hauled to the City of Glendive Landfill.

The community of Fallon set up a solid waste district in the early 1980s. Current contracts include weekly pickup in Fallon and pickups include areas approximately five miles outside of Fallon and then hauled to the City of Glendive Landfill. This service is assessed on residents' taxes, funded through a Solid Waste District.

According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's Solid Waste Management Section (MDEQ), the on-site disposal of solid wastes from a person's household or farm and certain categories of on-site industrial waste disposal operations are excluded from MDEQ's licensing requirements.

Telecommunications

Prairie County has one weekly newspaper, the Terry Tribune, which started in 1907. There are currently eight AM and six FM radio stations that can be received in the Prairie County area. Rural homes can select from satellite networks, such as DISH Network and Direct TV. Mid-Rivers Communications, a cooperative based in Circle Montana, and Century Link provide telephone service to Prairie County. Mid-Rivers Communications currently offers dial-up, cable, and satellite high-speed Internet services throughout the Prairie County area, although Mid-Rivers will be ending their cable services to Terry and the County at the end of 2016.

Utilities

Montana-Dakota Utilities (MDU) provides electricity and natural gas to Terry and to areas of the County located along its natural gas pipeline. MDU only provides electricity to Fallon. Tongue River Electric Cooperative provides electricity to a majority of the remaining rural residents of the County, while McCone Electric Cooperative provides power to the northern part of the county. A majority of rural residents in the County rely upon electricity, propane and fuel oil for heating and cooking.

Wastewater Treatment

The only public wastewater treatment systems located in the County are those used by the Town of Terry and the community of Fallon (Fallon Sewer District).

According to information from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Fallon's wastewater treatment system consists of an effluent collection system which transfers effluent into a treatment lagoon located north of the community. Sludge is periodically removed and treated effluent is ultimately discharges into the Buffalo Rapids Drainage of the Yellowstone River.

Outside of these communities, wastewater treatment is done via individual septic tanks and drainfields. This includes the County Fairgrounds which uses a septic system to treat wastewater. In the remainder of the County the use of individual septic systems and drinking water systems will likely remain the predominant means of meeting sanitation system requirements.

Montana Sanitation in Subdivisions Act is enforced by Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the Prairie County Environmental Health Department. The County utilizes a contracted sanitarian to work on sanitation issues in the County.

The County recently updated its wastewater regulation for the installation and operation of onsite wastewater treatment systems (septic/drainfield). In order to minimize the regulatory burden upon property owners or developers, the regulations were kept to the minimum necessary to comply with State statute and to protect public health and safety. The new regulations are approximately two pages in length.

Local Services Trends

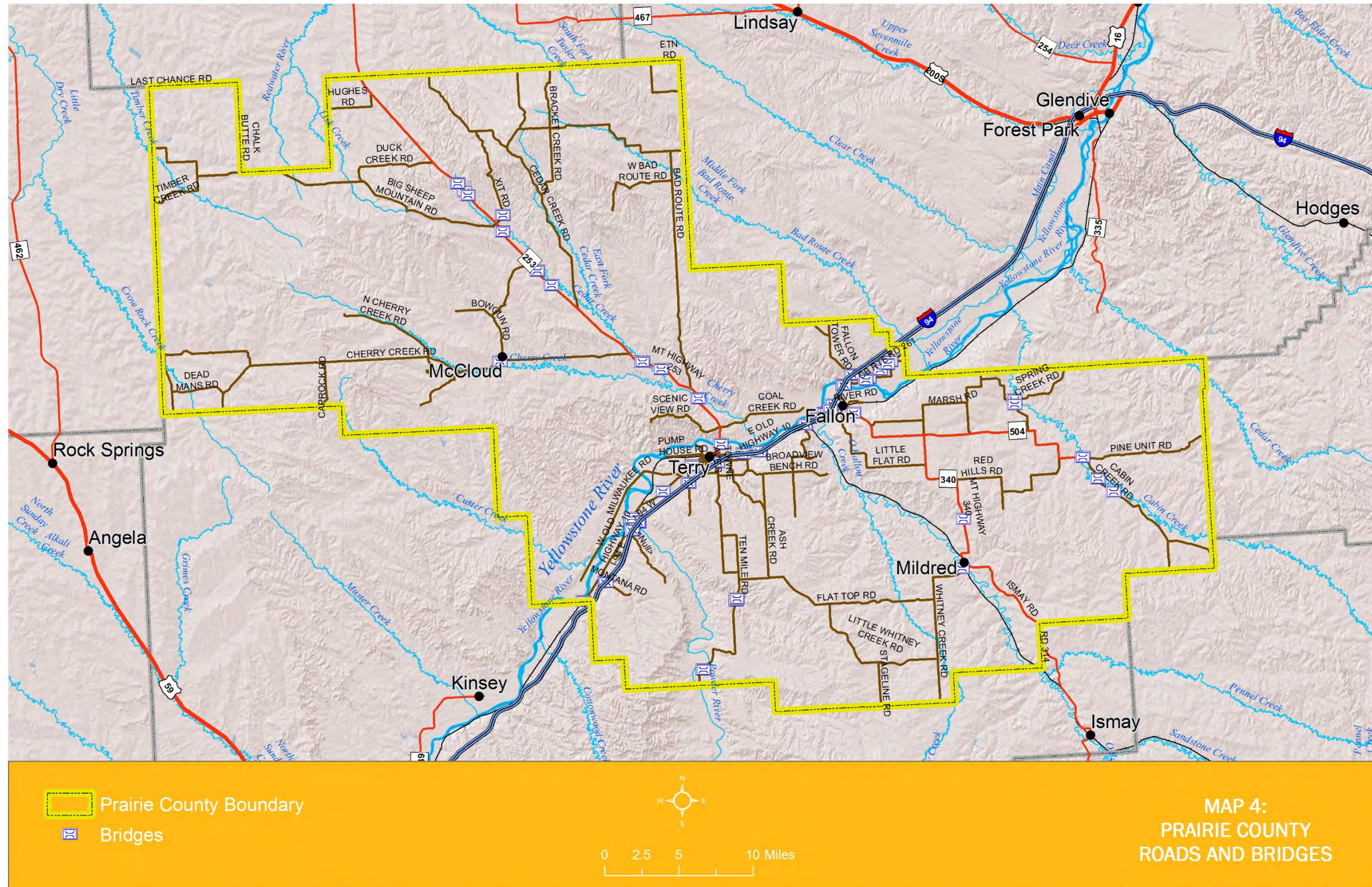
It would appear that in the short-term the County should be able to continue to provide adequate public services to its residents. Major changes in the economy of the County could alter this. Events such as significant natural resource development could provide and economic boost to the County and thus potentially enhance its capabilities to provide additional services. This could be contrasted by a scenario such as job losses in agriculture due to market forces or continued modernization which could have a ripple effect upon the other employment sectors.

The unknown long-term viability of government payment programs such as Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) could also have a substantial impact upon the County's ability to provide services. Since total government payments to the County from PILT and other governmental sources was over \$900,000 in 2014, any loss of these funds could dramatically impact the County's service provision.

Also, as mentioned earlier, if the senior population in the County continues to grow, it could affect the County's ability to provide healthcare and senior services, particularly without a corresponding increase in the amount of tax funding collected.

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Map 4 - Roads and Bridges



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Map 5 - Condition of Housing



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HOUSING

Housing data is invaluable when considering what steps the County might take to improve housing availability and quality. This information can help the County understand the quantity and condition of its housing stock and to determine future housing needs, trends and infrastructure demands. Housing programs and public utility services, which cater to existing and future demand, can then be designed and effectively administered. The following section includes a description of housing characteristics and trends in the County.

Age of Housing Units in Prairie County (2014)		
Year Built	Number of Units	Percentage
2010 or later	0	0.0
2000 to 2009	30	4.6
1990 to 1999	51	7.8
1980 to 1989	58	8.9
1970 to 1979	85	13.1
1960 to 1969	36	5.5
1950 to 1959	96	14.7
1940 to 1949	61	9.4
1939 or earlier	231	35.9

Montana Cadastral Data, Montana Department of Revenue, 2016

Data from the American Community Survey (ACS) in 2014 indicates that there are 648 housing units located within Prairie County. As defined by the Census Bureau a housing unit may be a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms or a single room that serve as separate living quarters. Of the 389 existing housing units in the County, over 60 percent were built prior to 1960.

Condition of Residential Structures – 2008 (Montana Department of Revenue)		
Condition	Number of Structures	Percentage
Unsound	23	4%
Poor	117	22%
Fair	319	59%
Average	53	10%
Good	16	3%
Excellent	10	2%

The age of the County’s housing stock is also highlighted in assessment data from the Montana Department of Revenue. In 2008, the Montana Department of Revenue compiled data as part of its appraisal process that classified the physical condition of housing throughout the State. The data from the Department provided physical assessments for 538 residential structures in the County. Of those structures, 140 (over 25 percent) were classified as being in either unsound or in poor physical condition.

In addition, the number of housing units in the County has continued to decline. In 2000, it was estimated that there were 718 units, by 2010 this was reduced to 673 and in 2014 it was estimated that there were 648 units.

The decrease in the number of and the aging of the County’s housing stock, coupled with an increasing senior population, has created additional needs for housing for both younger people and senior citizens. The influence of the Bakken oil boom upon housing costs has eased in the region substantially, but uncertainty exist about how future oil development may influence the County’s housing prices.

Median Single-Family Home Value Prairie and Surrounding Counties 5-Year Estimates (2009-2013)	
County	Value
Custer	\$112,110
Dawson	\$122,200
Fallon	\$106,700
Garfield	\$113,300
McCone	\$101,600
Prairie	\$69,800
Wibaux	\$102,700

Homeownership and Rental Characteristics

According to 2014 census data, there were 525 occupied housing units in Prairie County. Of that, 465 were owner-occupied and 69 were renter occupied.

	Estimate	Percent
Occupied Housing Units	525	100%
Owner-Occupied	465	86.9%
Renter-Occupied	69	13.1%

US Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 2014

The average household size for both renter and owner-occupied houses is 2-3 people. The majority of housing units, 85% in 2010, are single family units, with the remaining 15% are Mobile Homes and Multifamily.

Senior Housing

Both senior and fixed income housing was below fair market value for a 1 and 2-bedroom unit, however, for home purchase prices for the same population in 2010 were above the median appraised value.

Over a quarter of the County population is over 65 years old, and a 2010 study by the MT Department of Health and Human Services indicates seniors living alone is a major concern in the County. 54 males over 65 live alone, and 52 females over 65 live alone. The Town of Terry has a senior center and offers senior programs including meals and homemaker. The D&D Home Plus facility in Terry is the only assisted living facility in the County.

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

- Action for Eastern Montana, Glendive--various programs including HUD rental assistance programs, utility assistance, and weatherization programs and assistance providing low-income housing.
- Montana Department of Commerce, Helena--various programs under the Housing Division, including CDBG and HOME programs--available to local governments and nonprofits.
- USDA Rural Development, Billings
- Eastern Plains RC&D

Occupancy Characteristic

Vacancy status is an indicator of the housing market and provides information on the stability and quality of housing in the area. The vacancy rate in Prairie County is 19%.

Occupancy	Percent
Occupied	81.0%
Vacant	19.0%
Vacancy Type	
For Rent	.09%
Rented, not occupied	0.0%
For sale only	2.3%

Sold, not occupied	0.9%
Seasonal, recreational, occasional use	2.5%
For migrant workers	0.0%
Other Vacant	12.3%

US Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 2014

Other Characteristics of County Housing

Housing Heating Fuel	
Occupied housing units	525
Utility gas	44.8%
Bottled, tank or LP gas	25.3%
Electricity	22.3%
Fuel oil, Kerosene, etc.	1.9%
Coal or coke	0.6%
Wood	4.6%
Solar energy	0.0%
Other fuel	0.6%
No Fuel Used	0.0%

US Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 2014

Selected characteristics reported on housing units in Prairie County in 2014 included houses lacking complete plumbing facilities, houses lacking complete kitchen facilities and houses that did not have telephone service. Approximately 1.1.0% lack complete kitchen facilities and 3% had no telephone service. In addition, approximately 2.3% of households do not have a vehicle available to them. These selected housing characteristics can impact housing affordability.

Affordability

In the 2010-2014 period, 39% of County owner-occupied households spent greater than 30% of their household income on mortgage costs. The median monthly mortgage cost is \$870/month. In the same time period, over 43% of renter-occupied householder spent more

than 30% of their income on rent. The Median gross rent is \$495/month. (Headwaters Economics Economic Profile System).

This is important because an important indicator of economic hardship is whether housing is affordable. Research suggests that income share devoted to housing below 15% is a good proxy for highly affordable housing, while the income share devoted to housing that is above 30% is a good indicator for unaffordable housing (Headwaters Economics Economic Profile System).

Housing and Rental Assistance

Housing assistance is available to persons who meet income guidelines and to seniors and persons with disabilities.

According to the Montana Department of Commerce as of the Spring of 2016, the following programs have been used by homeowners and renters in the County over the last decade:

- Montana Board of Housing Loans: 15 participants
- Rental Housing Vouchers: 47 participants
- Housing rehabilitation: 1 participant

Agencies that provide housing and rental assistance in Prairie County include:

- Action for Eastern Montana, Glendive
- Montana Department of Commerce
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development, Billings
- Eastern Plains Economic Development Corporation, Terry

Beyond the resources the County already relies upon, there are a number of programs that could be used to improve housing availability and affordability. There include:

- Montana Department of Commerce
 - HOME (Home Investment Partnership Program)
 - Housing Trust Fund
 - Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Non-competitive Housing Grants
 - CDBG Housing Program
- USDA down payment assistance (home purchase)
- Neighbor Works Montana

In order to better understand its housing situation, the County in conjunction with the Town of Terry should consider undertaking a housing assessment and the creation of a housing plan to identify what steps are realistic for the County and the Town to take in order to improve housing.

Housing Trends

Without a significant influx in new residents, it is likely that the County's housing stock will continue to age and overall condition will decline. In addition, if the population of the County continues to age, the need for senior housing including those designated as "independent" and "assisted" in nature will likely increase.

LAND USE

The management of private and public lands has a significant impact upon the County’s economic prosperity. A slight majority of the land (576,320 acres) in the County is owned and managed by private landowners. The remaining acreage (524,944 acres) is owned and managed by the Federal and State governments. The Bureau of Land Management has management responsibility for approximately 601,804 acres of subsurface minerals in the County and manages approximately 447,920 surface acres. The State of Montana manages 77,024 acres. All told, private lands comprise 52.3 percent of the County’s land area, while public lands comprise 47.7 percent.

Agricultural Operations

Agriculture is the dominant land use in the County. In 2012, approximately 119,332 acres of land was in irrigated and non-irrigated cropland and 637,307 acres were in pasture and rangeland for livestock. In that year there were 186 agricultural operations in the County, with majority of those operations (105) dedicated to raising livestock and the remainder to crop production. The average size of the farms and ranches in the County was 4,135 acres in 2012.

Prairie County Agricultural Operations – 2012	
Type of Operation	Number
Oilseed & Grain Farming	40
Vegetable & Melon Farming	1
Greenhouse, Nursery, etc.	2
Other Crop Farming	38
Beef Cattle Ranch. & Farm.	89
Poultry & Egg Production	1
Sheep & Goat Farming	3
Other Animal Production	12

U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2014. National Agricultural Statistics Service

Approximately 80% of the land in Prairie County is considered rangeland. However, it takes a substantial amount of land to graze a cow/calf pair. In 2006 it was estimated that a single cow/calf pair yearly would require an average of 30 acres for grazing in the County. Since the County has approximately 1,000,000 acres of grazing lands, in theory approximately 30,000 pairs could be supported on grazing lands alone. This number does not include those cattle that could be supported on cultivated agricultural lands such as harvested corn or wheat fields.

According to the USDA, Montana livestock producers of cattle and calves rank tenth in the nation in commodity production and Prairie County ranked 33th in the State of Montana for livestock production in 2015.

Cattle Inventories – Southeast Montana Counties 2013-2015				
County	2013	2014	2015	State Rank
Carter	94,000	91,000	89,000	6
Custer	100,000	110,000	105,000	3
Fallon	56,000	54,000	53,000	18
Powder River	90,000	88,000	86,000	7
Prairie	34,000	33,000	32,500	33
Rosebud	95,000	92,000	90,000	5
Wibaux	24,500	23,500	23,000	41

U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2015. National Agricultural Statistics Service

Conservation Reserve Program

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a long-term cropland program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture that was established in 1985. The primary goals of program are to reduce soil erosion on farmland and to enhance wildlife habitat.

Since the completion of the County’s original growth policy in 2006, the amount of farmland enrolled in the CRP has been significantly reduced. In 2006, approximately 42,308 acres or 4 percent of the land in the County was enrolled in the CRP. By 2014 this number had been reduced to 18,670 acres or less than 2 percent of the land in the County. The reduction in CRP acreage thus opens more cropland to production and could have a positive impact upon the County’s economy.

Noxious Weeds

Noxious weeds are a concern when it comes to the protection of grazing land quality and wildlife habitat. Management tools for combatting weeds include information and education, containment, suppression of existing infestations, and prevention of new infestations. Prairie County employs 2-3 persons for seasonal weed spraying and the weed control operation is supported by a County tax levy and funds from the BLM. The County Weed Board is responsible for the control of noxious weeds on public and private lands through a cost-share program with agricultural producers.

The County Weed Board has separated noxious weed infestations in the County into three different management areas, covering approximately 116,300 acres or ten percent of the land area of the County. The purpose of the Prairie County Weed Board and Management Program is to protect agricultural and natural resources from the spread of noxious weeds by containing large infestations and preventing new infestations from becoming established.

The Prairie County Weed Board assists landowners by providing information about noxious weeds and cost share services to help control or eradicate noxious weeds on their property.

Noxious Weeds Located in Prairie County	
Category 1 Weeds	Category 2 Weeds
Leafy spurge	Salt Cedar
Russian knapweed	
Spotted knapweed	Category 3 Weeds
Diffuse knapweed	Not applicable
Canada thistle	
Whitetop	
Houndstongue	
Field bindweed	
Dalmatian toadflax	

Prairie County Weed District, 2016

Pipelines

When proposed for development through eastern Montana, the Keystone XL pipeline was strongly supported by most local governments in the region, including Prairie County. The economic benefits of the pipeline would have been dramatic for the County. The Environmental Impact Statement developed by the United States Department of Energy estimated that the property taxes generated by the proposed project in Prairie County alone would have amounted to \$5,869,630. To put this in perspective, in 2006 the County levied \$2,106,988 in property taxes.

With the denial of the application to build the Keystone XL, the future of pipeline through the region is unknown. Regardless, the residents of the County support the responsible development of oil and natural gas pipelines.

Subdivision Regulations

The County’s current subdivision regulations were adopted in 2006. Subdivision regulations are meant to address issues related to new residential and commercial development thus ensuring accurate surveying and monumentation, providing legal and physical access, provision of utilities, right-of-way location, mitigating hazards and ensuring the overall development fits the character of the County. Subdivision review can also help ensure that the installation of infrastructure (drinking water, wastewater treatment and roads) is completed in accordance with County standards to promote health and safety, reduce environmental impacts, and to support the cost effective operation and maintenance of services and infrastructure.

Because the County's current regulations are almost 10 years old, they should be reviewed in the near future to ensure that they comply with current State statutes, and are consistent with the guidance found in the Growth Policy.

Land Use Trends

Agricultural operations will remain the predominant land use in the County. Unless significant natural resource or utility development occurs within or near the County, residential development will be relatively limited in the near future.

NATURAL RESOURCES

One of the greatest assets that the County has is its natural resources. These include excellent grazing and cropland to the large amounts of public land and water resources.



Yellowstone River and Railroad

Natural resource planning needs to find a balance between economic growth, land development, and conservation. The following information on natural resources in Prairie County provides an overview of some of the County's resources.

AGATES

The Yellowstone River valley is well known for its 'moss agates' that are found in the gravel bars of the Yellowstone River. The term 'moss' refers to the patterns that

occur in agates and look like moss-shaped features. These features result from the presence of manganese or iron oxides in the agates.

Agate hunters spend a lot of time walking, paddling or boating from place to place along the River to collect agates and the section of the River in Prairie County is no exception.

WATER RESOURCES

Water is a vital to Prairie County's economic survival, particularly to its agricultural producers. Groundwater resources in the County provide drinking water for families, stock water for livestock, and irrigation for crops. The residents of Prairie County depend on clean, safe water from the Yellowstone and Powder Rivers.

Surface Water

A majority of Montana's water supply is a result of melting snowpack and inflows. Residents of Prairie County primarily depend on water available from the Yellowstone River. In the early to mid-2000's Montana faced a drought and Prairie County was no exception. That has changed with Prairie County and much of eastern Montana seeing record precipitation in 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2014.

Prairie County contains a portion of six watersheds:

- Little Dry Creek
- Lower Powder River
- Lower Yellowstone River

- Lower Yellowstone-Sunday
- O’Fallon Creek
- Redwater River

The Prairie County Conservation District has one of the largest held water reservations in the region and the priority date for this reservation is 1978. This water is reserved for agricultural irrigation in the County and cannot be purchased or transferred out of the County. There is 68,678 acre feet of water reserved from the Yellowstone River and 483 acre feet of water reserved from the Powder River for future irrigation projects. There are currently eight irrigators that have reserved water rights authorized for their use in the County.



Buffalo Rapids Irrigation Offices

Buffalo Rapids Irrigation District #2 manages irrigation water for Prairie, Dawson and Custer Counties encompassing an area of 45,800 acres. The Project is divided into the First and Second Divisions. Principal structures include five pumping plants that pump water directly from the Yellowstone River and one relift pumping plant to provide irrigation water for 22,719 acres of land in the vicinity of Glendive, Fallon, and Terry.

The First Division consists of the Glendive Unit and its extension. It serves 13,254 acres of irrigable land extending from Fallon to Glendive along the west bank of the Yellowstone River. No storage is provided as the water is pumped directly from the Yellowstone River to the Main Canal by motor-driven pumps.

The Second Division serves 9,465 acres of irrigable land along the south bank of the Yellowstone River between Miles City and Fallon, Montana. Three separate tracts of irrigable land are designated as the Shirley, Terry, and Fallon Units. Water is pumped directly from the Yellowstone River for each unit.

Each unit has a separate canal and lateral system with water control structures to provide for distribution of water to the land. A total of 62 miles of canals and 96 miles of laterals is included in the project.

The project is operated by the Buffalo Rapids Board of Control as the agent of Buffalo Rapids Irrigation District No. 1 and Buffalo Rapids Irrigation District No. 2. In the future, Buffalo Rapids may apply for use of reserved water rights from the County Conservation District for and expansion of irrigation services.

The County has an interest in examining the potential to utilize some of the water reservations to either provide additional irrigation for cropland or to develop hydroelectric projects to benefit County residents.

Groundwater

A Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology study (2000, Smith et al.) characterizes the groundwater resources in Prairie County into three major hydrologic units. The first is a Shallow Hydrologic Unit, which consists of water within 200 feet of the land surface. This is the most utilized groundwater resource in the County, providing water for domestic, stock, and irrigation purposes.

The second is a Deep Hydrologic Unit, consisting of groundwater at depths more than 200 feet below land surface but above the Upper Hell Creek Formation. This is the least utilized groundwater source in the County, but still provides water for domestic and stock-water purposes. The third is the Fox Hills-Lower Hell Creek aquifer is a nearly-continuous sandstone groundwater source which is also used for domestic and stock-water purposes and is mostly used along and south of the Yellowstone River because north of the river the water is more than 1,000 feet below land surface, making well installation and pumping costs relatively cost prohibitive.

Drinking Water

Maintaining good quality water is important for providing County residents drinking water and for stock-watering. The quality of groundwater for drinking purposes varies from location to location in the County. This is due to difference in the chemical composition of aquifer sediments and time for minerals to dissolve into the water. Generally, deeper aquifers in the County have higher water quality, with some areas of notably high fluoride levels. The shallower aquifers are generally more prone to surface contaminants and have more dissolved solids. Iron concentrations in the shallow aquifers are noted by the iron staining on houses where lawn irrigation water has repeatedly touched the exterior. In addition, some sources of groundwater are high in sodium or are alkaline in nature, thus making their use for human consumption difficult.

Water Rights

Montana law establishes that the State's water resources are the property of the State of Montana and are to be used for the benefit of the people. The Yellowstone River Basin Division of the Montana Water Court and the Water Adjudication Bureau of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) share authority for water rights decisions.

The Prairie County Conservation District has one of the largest appropriations of irrigation water rights along the Yellowstone River. It is for 68,467 acre feet and has a priority date of December 1, 1978. The reservation of water will expire in 2025.

A water right in Montana can be held by an individual, a group of individuals, organization, corporation, government agency, etc. In Montana, water rights are usually attached to the land upon which they are used. If a piece of land is transferred, any water right attached to the piece of land generally along to the new owner unless specifically stated otherwise. Information regarding water rights in Prairie County can be accessed online from the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC): <http://wr.msl.mt.gov/default.aspx>

Water Rights in Prairie County		
Water Right Type	Number of Claims	Definitions
Statements of Claim	2080	Pre-1973 Water Law claim of existing water right
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stock Water 	1186	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrigation 	256	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic 	95	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground Water 	934	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surface Water 	1146	
Powder River Declarations	159	Pre-1973 Water Law Powder River Basin declaration of existing water
Groundwater Certificates	403	Post-1973 certificate for groundwater use
Provisional Permits	118	Post-1973 provisional permit for water (surface water or large amount of ground water)
Stock water Permits	13	Approved provisional permit for stock water
Exempt Rights	22	Pre-1973 right for stock or domestic use, exempt from filing, filed voluntarily
Conservation District Records	8	Completed portion of water

MINERALS

Approximately 55 percent of the mineral resources in Prairie County are owned by the Bureau of Land Management. ConocoPhillips owns approximately 6-8 percent of the subsurface mineral rights in the County. They purchased the rights from Burlington Resources in 2006.

Coal

According to an analysis done by the U.S. Department of Interior, coal resources located in the Terry badlands are mostly lower grade coal beds of lignite with some areas of subbituminous coal. The identified coal resources in the Badlands fall into the sub-economic rank and are unlikely to be developed in the near future.

There are also coal resources located in southeastern Prairie County, but no estimates were found on amounts or feasibility of mining these resources. In addition, there are significant coal resources around Big Sheep Mountain in the northern portion of the County.

Oil and Gas

Parts of the County, particularly the eastern end contain oil and gas resources. Part of the Cedar Creek gas field is located in this area and Montana-Dakota Utilities Company uses the field to supply natural gas to Miles City, Terry, and Glendive. A small portion of the prolific Pine Oil Field also lies in Prairie County. The area of the Terry badlands has a moderate potential for oil and gas production, but to date no development has taken place.

Since March of 2012, only 4,240 acres in eight tracts has been leased for oil or gas in the County.

Sand and Gravel Resources

Other areas of the County produce scoria, sand, and gravel and most of these deposits are located on privately owned land. The scoria deposits are a result of burning coal beds baking the surrounding materials.

Sand and gravel are important resources for the construction and maintenance of roads as well as the construction of new homes and businesses. According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality Open Cut Mining Program there are 22 permitted gravel pits in Prairie County. None of those pits is located within one mile of the Town limits.

According to the United States Natural Resource and Conservation Soil Survey for Prairie County there are significant gravel resources in the County, mainly associated with the Yellowstone River Valley and its tributaries.

WILDLIFE

The County is blessed with incredible wildlife resources that range from game animals such as deer and pheasants to songbirds and fish. All of which provide opportunities for hunting and fishing and wildlife watching. While wildlife can provide benefits to the County, they can also present hurdles, particularly when a species is listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act as these designations can have a dramatic impact upon the management of private and public lands.

When a wildlife species listed as endangered or threatened is found on private property, the owners may be required to meet the management demands of the United States Fish and

Wildlife Service. Yet the agency may not be limited by economics with regards to its demand to protect a species. When an endangered or threatened species is found on public lands, it can also have a dramatic effect upon how that land is managed, regardless of its historic use, such as grazing.

In addition, conversations around the State of Montana about the reintroduction of animals such as free-roaming bison would pose completely different issues for the residents of the County. Bison come with a set of management issues ranging from the potential transmission of brucellosis to domestic cattle to more mundane problems such as keeping them fenced in. Residents in the County would oppose the reintroduction of such animals.

In light of these issues, Prairie County residents want to have the ability to influence and guide any wildlife management plans and decision that will affect them.

Figure 8 - Wildlife Species of Concern in Prairie County
 Montana Natural Heritage Program, Montana State Library, 2016

Birds			
Scientific Name	Common Name	USFWS	BLM
Haliaeetus leucocephalus	Bald Eagle	DM; BGEPA; MBTA; BCC	Sensitive
Ammodramus bairdii	Baird's Sparrow		Sensitive
Anthus spragueii	Sprague's Pipit		Sensitive
Aquila chrysaetos	Golden Eagle	BGEPA; MBTA; BCC	Sensitive
Ardea herodias	Great Blue Heron		
Athene cunicularia	Burrowing Owl		Sensitive
Buteo regalis	Ferruginous Hawk		Sensitive
Calcarius ornatus	Chestnut-collared Longspur		Sensitive
Centrocercus urophasianus	Greater Sage-Grouse		Sensitive
Coccyzus erythrophthalmus	Black-billed Cuckoo		
Dolichonyx oryzivorus	Bobolink		

PRAIRIE COUNTY GROWTH POLICY

Falco peregrinus	Peregrine Falcon	DM	Sensitive
Lanius ludovicianus	Loggerhead Shrike		Sensitive
Melanerpes erythrocephalus	Red-headed Woodpecker		Sensitive
Numenius americanus	Long-billed Curlew		Sensitive
Oreoscoptes montanus	Sage Thrasher		Sensitive
Spizella breweri	Brewer's Sparrow		Sensitive
Sternula antillarum	Least Tern	LE	

Fish			
Scientific Name	Common Name	USFWS	BLM
Cyprinus elongatus	Blue Sucker		
Macrhybopsis gelida	Sturgeon Chub		Sensitive
Macrhybopsis meeki	Sicklefin Chub		Sensitive
Polyodon spathula	Paddlefish	LE	Special Status
Sander canadensis	Sauger		Sensitive
Scaphirhynchus albus	Pallid Sturgeon		

Mammals			
Scientific Name	Common Name	USFWS	BLM
Corynorhinus townsendii	Townsend's Big-eared Bat	Sensitive	Sensitive
Cynomys ludovicianus	Black-tailed Prairie Dog	Sensitive	Sensitive
Lasiurus cinereus	Hoary Bat		

Myotis lucifugus	Little Brown Myotis		Sensitive
Myotis thysanodes	Fringed Myotis		
Sorex merriami	Merriam's Shrew		
Vulpes velox	Swift Fox		Sensitive

Reptiles and Amphibians			
Scientific Name	Common Name	USFWS	BLM
Apalone spinifera	Spiny Softshell		Sensitive
Heterodon nasicus	Plains Hog-nosed Snake		Sensitive
Phrynosoma hernandesi	Greater Short-horned Lizard		Sensitive
Anaxyrus cognatus	Great Plains Toad		Sensitive
Spea bombifrons	Plains Spadefoot		Sensitive

Vascular Plants			
Scientific Name	Common Name	USFWS	BLM
Carex crawei	Crawe's Sedge		Sensitive
Cyperus erythrorhizos	Red-root Flatsedge		

LE--Listed Endangered DM--Delisted, monitored BGEPA--The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act MBTA--Migratory Bird Treaty Act BCC--Birds of Conservation Concern 2008

WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE

There are four fire departments located in the County:

- Prairie County Rural
- Terry Volunteer
- Cabin Creek Fire District, and
- Fallon Fire District

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) also provide personnel and equipment for fire suppression mainly on the lands they manage.

Fuel types in the County vary from grasses and crops such as a hay fields, wheat, barley, and oats to sagebrush and scattered juniper to heavy concentrations of juniper/ponderosa pine in the western part of the County. Cottonwood bottomlands adjacent to the Yellowstone and Powder Rivers and Cabin Creek also present some unique wildfire challenges. Fuel loading is generally light to moderate for most of the County. Fuels such as grasses can be effectively managed and reduced through management techniques such as grazing livestock.

Wildfire ignitions in the County occur from both natural and human causes. The County's dry climate coupled with the historic drought, remoteness and ruggedness of the area contribute to the wildfire hazard. Poor access roads and long driving times often slow response times for the fire departments.

The County has not actively encouraged the development of defensible space around structures. An example of a structure with improve defensibility would be one with a metal roof and fire resistant siding surrounded by thinned trees and shrubs and perhaps a green lawn.

In 2011, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation identified properties in the wildland-urban interface. Map 7 shows the location of these parcels. For the purposes of this document, Prairie County is not going to identify any further areas of wildland-urban interface and is not going to develop regulations specific to such areas.

NATURAL AND MAN-MADE HAZARDS

Like other counties in the state, Prairie County has its share of potential natural hazards. The current Prairie County Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan (2012) identifies the following hazards for the County:

- Seasonal Storms
- Wildfires
- Oil and Natural Gas Pipeline
- Hazardous Materials
- Drought
- Transportation Accidents (i.e. railroads)
- Communicable Disease and Bioterrorism
- Structure Fires

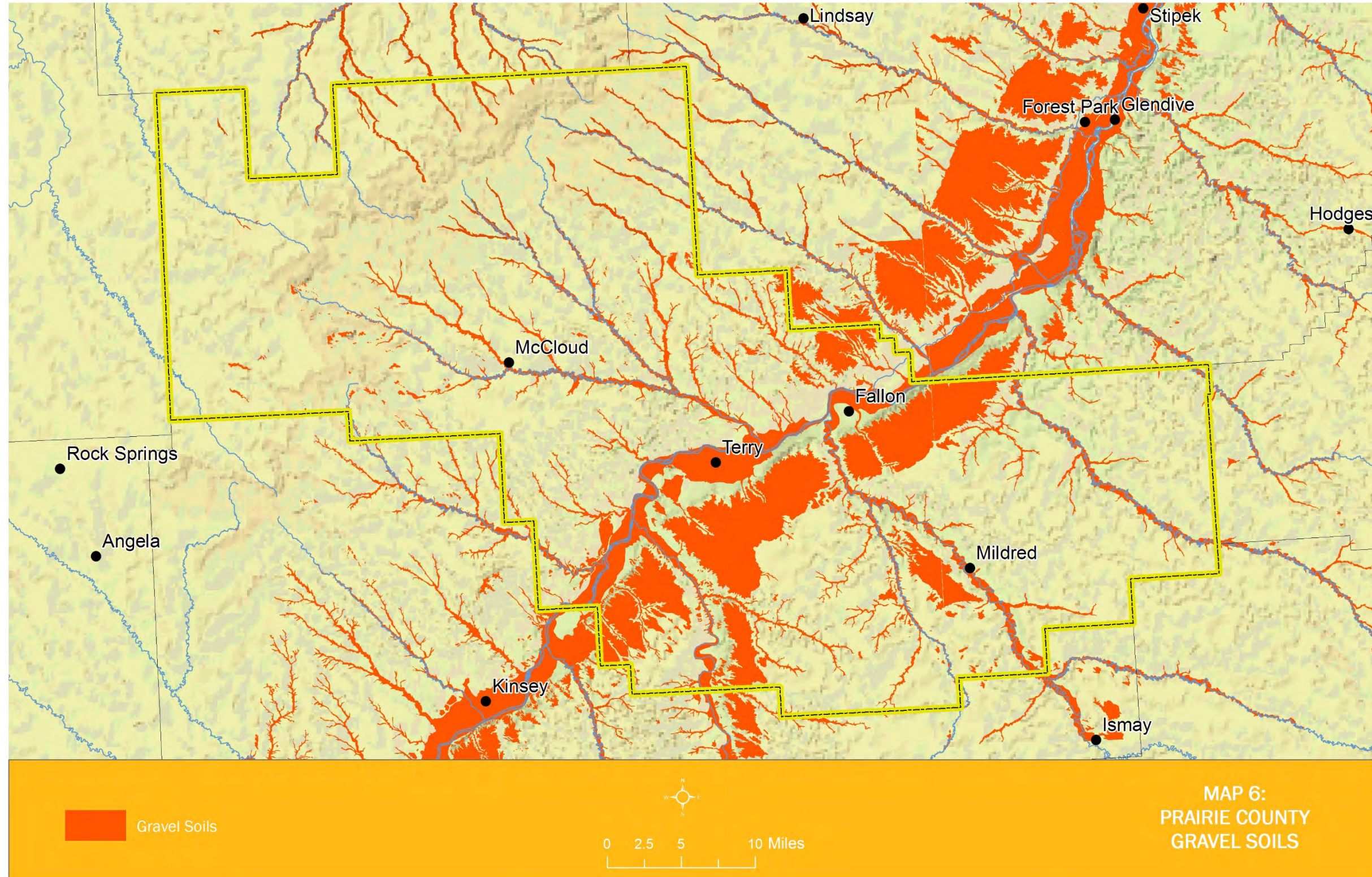
These hazards are discussed in detail in the Mitigation Plan.

It is important to note, that flooding is not specifically identified as a hazard in the Plan. In addition, the Plan indicates that neither the County or the Town of Terry has participated in the National Flood Insurance Program. In fact, per the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Floodplain Program’s “Status of Floodplain Mapping Inventory” indicates that Prairie County is currently not participating in the National Flood Insurance Program and therefore not regulating the County’s floodplains.

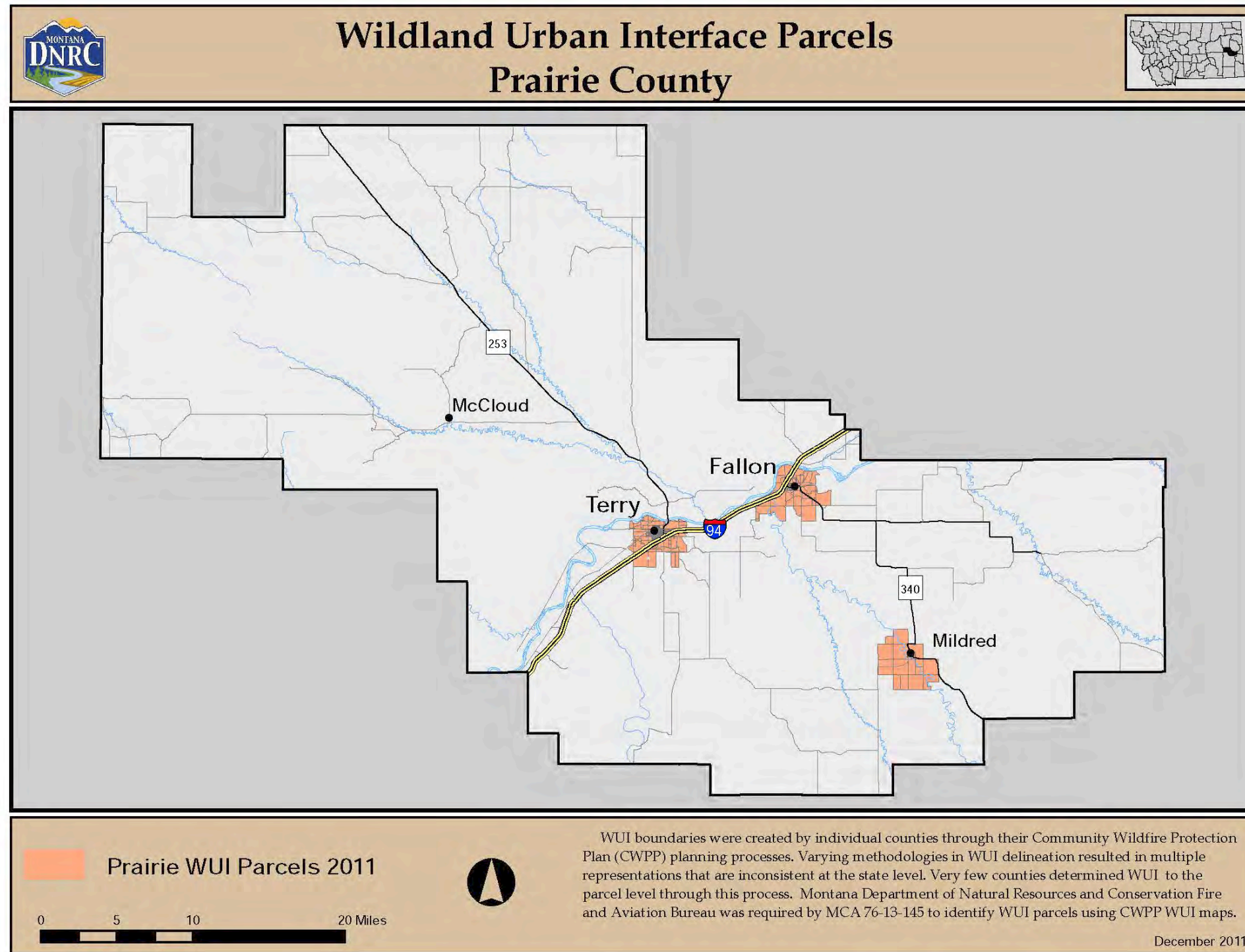
Natural Resource Trends

Baring events such as significant natural resource development, downturns in commodity markets or perhaps new periods of extended drought, the use and condition of natural resources in the County will likely remain stable and similar in nature to the present situation.

Map 6 - Gravel Soils



Map 7 - Wildland-Urban Interface



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public involvement has been essential in developing the growth policy. To date, one public meeting has been held to discuss the Growth Policy. This was a “kickoff” meeting held on

March 14, 2016 between the County Planning Board and with consulting staff from Great West Engineering. The meeting was held to discuss the purpose of a growth policy and the intended outcomes of the project and to identify initial opportunities and issues that the County residents would like to address.



The Planning Board held a second meeting on July 27, 2016 to discuss the first draft of the growth policy and to make recommendations with regards to edits. Staff from the Terry Tribune attended the meeting in order to include an article about the update of the growth policy in the newspaper.

In order to provide County residents with better access to the project, a project website was developed to allow people to access updated project information any time of day. The website identified the status of the project, previous and planned meetings and allowed people the ability to download copies of the current County Growth Policy and the most current version of the draft Growth Policy.

Once the final draft of the Growth Policy is ready, the Planning Board will schedule a public hearing for residents to weigh in on the document prior to the Board making a recommendation for adoption to the County Commission. The draft will be available well in advance of the hearing in hardcopy form at the County Courthouse and via the project website as downloadable document. Additional articles will be published in the Terry Tribune and public notification of the hearing will also be placed in the paper.

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IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Implementation of goals identified earlier in this Growth Policy will take time, resources and a variety of methods. Most important of all implementation will require a commitment by the residents, the Planning Board and the County Commission to follow through on the guidance provided by the document. Implementation of this plan also includes meeting the statutory requirements for subdivision review, cooperation between the County and the Town of Terry and the review and update of the document in the future.

This implementation schedule found in the following pages mirrors the goals and objectives identified earlier in the document.

Implementation Schedule

ECONOMY		
Action	Responsibility	Schedule
Develop a marketing plan for Prairie County and the Town of Terry including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of services • Real estate availability • Attractions • Distribution and advertising 	Planning Board, County Commission, Town Council, Town Staff and Prairie County Chamber of Commerce	2-3 years
Review and update the County subdivision regulations to meet statutory requirements while minimizing hurdles to new growth.	Planning Board, County Commission, County Attorney	1 year
Create a subdivision and sanitation brochure to clearly identify the process for developing land in the County for residential and commercial purposes.	Planning Board, County Sanitarian and County Commission	1 year
Establish a community rental directory and a community property for sale directory for prospective buyers.	Planning Board, County Commission, Town Council, Town Staff and Prairie County Chamber of Commerce	2 years
Create a plan to lobby the State congressional delegation to address the current PILT system.	County Commission and Town Council	1 year
Promote oil and gas exploration and infrastructure in the County.	Planning Board, County Commission, Town Council and Prairie County Chamber of Commerce	Ongoing

LOCAL SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE		
Action	Responsibility	Schedule
Develop a Capital Improvements Plan	Planning Board, County Commission, Town Council, and Town Staff	2 years
Meet with State and Federal agencies to discuss the maintenance of County roads accessing state and federal lands.	County Commission, Planning Board, Road Department.	6 months
Meet with local, State and Federal agencies to coordinate and improve the provision of law enforcement services.	Planning Board, County Commissioners, County Sheriff, MT FWP and DOI Bureau of Land Management law enforcement.	6 months
Coordinate with local, State and Federal agencies in the provision of wildland fire protection.	Planning Board, County Commissioners, County fire departments, MT DNRC and DOI Bureau of Land Management.	6 months
Support the operation and maintenance of the Prairie County Museum.	Prairie County Museum Board, County Commissioners and Prairie County Chamber of Commerce.	Ongoing

HOUSING		
Action	Responsibility	Schedule
Undertake a County-wide housing assessment	Planning Board, County Commission, Terry Town Council, realtors, builders	2 years
Develop a comprehensive housing plan, including funding mechanism.	Planning Board, County Commission, Terry Town Council, realtors, builders	3 years
Develop a plan for the renovation and or removal of aged and dilapidated, including the provision of incentives for demolition and disposal and identification of funding sources	Planning Board, County Commission, Terry Town Council, realtors, builders	4 years

LAND USE		
Action	Responsibility	Schedule
Review and update County Subdivision Regulations.	Planning Board, County Commission, County Attorney	1 year
Meet with the appropriate State and Federal agencies to ensure that the growth policy is recognized as a document providing the County with coordinating status.	Planning Board and County Commission	1 year

NATURAL RESOURCES		
Action	Responsibility	Schedule
Meet with the Buffalo Rapids Irrigation District to identify potential agricultural or hydroelectric water projects in the County	Planning Board, County Commission and County Conservation District	2 years
Develop a noxious weed management plan for the County, including an education component.	Planning Board, County Commission and County Conservation District	3 years

Subdivision Review

The Montana Code Annotated requires that the County Council provide a Statement in the Growth Policy explaining how they will:

- define the criteria in 76-3-608 (3) (a) M.C.A.;
- evaluate and make decisions regarding proposed subdivisions with respect to the criteria in 76-3-608 (3) (a) M.C.A.

Definition of 76-3-608 Criteria

Prairie County will use the following definitions as found in the Subdivision Regulations for each of the criteria listed below.

- Agriculture: All aspects of farming and ranching including the cultivation or tilling of soil: dairying; the production, cultivation, growing, harvesting of agricultural or

horticultural commodities; raising of livestock, bees, fur-bearing animals or poultry; and any practices including forestry or lumbering operations, including for market or delivery to storage, to market, or to carriers for transportation to market

- Agricultural Water User Facilities: Those facilities, which provide water for irrigation or stock watering to agricultural land for the production of agricultural products. These include, but are not limited to ditches, head gates, pipes and other water conveying facilities.
- Local Services: Local services are defined as any and all services that local governments, public or private utilities are authorized to provide for the benefit of their citizens.
- 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.
- Public Health and Safety: The prevailing healthful, sanitary condition of well-being for the community at large. Conditions that relate to public health and safety include but are not limited to: disease control and prevention; emergency services; environmental health; flooding; fire or wildfire hazards; rock falls or landslides; unstable soils; steep slopes and other natural hazards; high voltage lines or high pressure gas lines and air or vehicular traffic hazards.
- Wildlife: Those animals that are not domesticated or tamed
- Wildlife Habitat: The place or area where wildlife naturally lives or travels through.

Evaluation of Subdivisions Based Upon 76-3-608 Criteria

Subdivision applications and subdivision review by the County staff will include documentation and analysis of whether or not the proposed subdivision will impact agriculture, agricultural water user facilities, local services, the natural environment, wildlife, wildlife habitat, and public health and safety as defined in this Growth Policy.

The County will evaluate each proposed subdivision with regards to the expected impacts upon each of the criteria, and the degree to which the subdivision applicant proposes to mitigate any adverse impacts. This evaluation will be based upon the subdivision application, staff review and reports and information gathered from public hearings and other sources of information as deemed appropriate.

Upon completion of its review and evaluation, the County will render a decision on the proposed subdivision with respect to the requirements of the Prairie County Subdivision Regulations, the County Growth Policy, and the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act.

Evaluation Criteria for Effects on Agriculture

- a. Potential conflicts between the proposed subdivision and adjacent agricultural operations shall be evaluated including:
 - Interference with the movement of livestock or farm machinery
 - Interference with agricultural production and activities
 - Maintenance of fences
 - Proliferation of weeds
 - Harassment of livestock by pets

Evaluation Criteria for Effects on Agricultural Water User Facilities

- a. Easements to protect the operation and maintenance of water user facilities on or accessed through a subdivision shall be considered.
- b. Potential subdivision nuisance complaints or problems due to agricultural water user facilities such as safety hazards to residents or water problems from irrigation ditches, head gates, siphons, sprinkler systems or other facilities shall be considered.
- c. Ownership of water rights and the historic and current use of facility on the proposed subdivision shall be examined.
- d. Allocation of water rights within a subdivision shall be considered.

Evaluation Criteria for Effects Upon Local Services

- a. All subdivisions shall be provided with adequate legal and physical access. This will include gravel roads.
- b. All subdivisions shall have access to electrical power and telephone services.

Evaluation Criteria for Effect on Natural Environment

- a. All subdivisions will be designed to minimize their impact upon the environment.

Evaluation Criteria for Effect on Public Health and Safety

- a. Potential hazards to residents of subdivision from high voltage lines, high-pressure gas lines, highways, roads, railroads or railroad crossings, nearby industrial or mining activity.
- b. Presence of natural hazards such as flooding, high winds, wildfire, or difficulties such as high water table, expansive soils or excessive slopes.

Evaluation Criteria for Effect on Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

- a. All subdivisions will be designed to minimize their impact upon wildlife.

Public Hearing Procedure

Public hearings on proposed subdivisions will be conducted by the County of Prairie County Planning Board for subdivision proposals in the County. Hearings shall be structured according to the following procedures:

1. Planning Board President opens the public hearing.
2. Planner provides a summary of the subdivision application and staff report.
3. Subdivision applicant is given an opportunity to make comments.
4. Planning Board members are given an opportunity to ask clarifying questions of the subdivision applicant and planning staff.
5. Members of the public have an opportunity to make comments. ¹
6. Public comment is closed and Planning Board discussion takes place.
7. If Planning Board members feel prepared to make a decision on the application, they will vote to either recommend project approval, conditional approval, or denial.
8. If Planning Board members feel they need more information or time to consider the project before voting, or if the subdivision applicant wishes to modify the project and bring a revised proposal back to the Planning Board, the Board may opt to extend the public hearing in accordance with the review period outlined in statute. An extension of the public hearing must take place with the concurrence of the applicant.
9. Once all public comments have been received within the allowable timeframe, and once the Planning Board has taken its vote, the Planning Board President closes the public hearing.

Coordination with the Town of Terry

Prairie County will examine the potential to coordinate efforts with the Town of Terry in the following ways:

- Continue to provide law enforcement to the Town of Terry.
- Cooperate with the Town of Terry to maintain and improve the capabilities of the Sheriff's department.
- Cooperate with the Terry Rural Fire Department and the Town of Terry to provide firefighting services to residents of the Town.
- Partner with MTFWP, the BLM, and Town of Terry to develop a public river access and boat launch on the Yellowstone River adjacent to Highway 253.
- Work with the Town of Terry to market the Calypso Trail and other recreational opportunities

Conditions and Timing for Review and Revision

To be a useful and relevant document that will assist the County in making decisions regarding the issues the County faces; the Growth Policy will need to be periodically reviewed and updated.

The document will be reviewed every 5 years from the date of its adoption. The Planning Board will be the entity responsible for reviewing the Policy, and will make any recommendations regarding revisions or changes to the County Commission. Future reviews will include an evaluation of every section of the Policy. It is anticipated that a full update of the Policy will be necessary within 10 years of its original adoption.

The Growth Policy may also be revised when a situation or issue has been identified by the public that necessitates changes or when changes are deemed to be in the public interest by the Planning Board or the County Commission. It is also possible that Legislative changes to the Growth Policy statutes may require significant amendments or changes. Finally, amendments to the Policy may also be necessary when litigation in the County or elsewhere in Montana sets legal precedent that is clearly contrary to the Stated goals, objectives or implementation strategies in the growth policy.

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SOURCES

Introduction

1. Climate data: National Weather Service
2. Prairie County
3. Prairie County Chamber of Commerce
4. Population data: United State Census Bureau

Population Characteristics

1. ESRI, 2015
2. Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System, 2014
3. United States Census Bureau

Economy

1. Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System, 2014
2. USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service
3. Montana Department of Agriculture
4. Montana Department of Commerce, Board of Housing

Local Services & Public Facilities

1. Prairie County
2. Prairie County Memorial Hospital
3. Librarytechnology.org
4. Prairie County Chamber of Commerce
5. Prairie County School District
6. Eastern Plains Economic Development Corporation 2012-2017 CEDS

Housing

1. American Community Survey, Census Bureau
2. Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System, 2014
3. Montana Department of Revenue

Land Use

1. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
2. Montana Department of Revenue
3. Prairie County Community Wildfire Protection Plan
4. US Department of Energy, EIS for Keystone XL Pipeline

Natural Resources

1. Montana Department of Revenue
2. Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
3. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
4. Montana Natural History Program, Montana State Library
5. Prairie County Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan



Water/Wastewater ▪ Transportation ▪ Grant Administration ▪ Development ▪
Surveying ▪ Environmental Resources ▪ Natural Resources ▪ Planning ▪ Construction Management

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