

- Potential conflicts between facility users and subdivision residents including:
 - Seeps, flooding, washouts,
 - Obstructions and interference
 - Unintended uses (recreation or landscaping)
- Water rights
- Vehicular access to facility

Effect on local services

- Increased demand on services and need to expand services
- Ability to provide services to subdivision
 - Response times
 - Conditions of roads, bridges, and railroad crossings
 - Physical Barriers.
- Provision of adequate local services and public facilities simultaneous or prior to onset of impact.
- Any special or rural improvement districts that would obligate local government involvement fiscally or administratively

Effect on natural environment

- Runoff reaching surface waters (e.g., streams, rivers or riparian areas).
- Impacts on ground water supply, quantity, and quality.
- Impacts on air quality.
- Impacts on scenic resources.
- Impacts on historic, pre-historic, and cultural resources
- Noxious weeds.
- Wetlands not covered under nationwide permits.
- Cumulative impacts of multiple subdivisions on natural environment.

Effect on wildlife

- Effects of humans and pets on wildlife

Effect on wildlife and wildlife habitat

- Loss of significant, important and critical habitat, as defined.
- Impacts on significant, important and critical habitat including potential effects of
 - roads and traffic
 - closure of existing operations and/or potential to provide new access to public lands

Effect on public health and safety

- Creation of potential man-made hazards (e.g. unsafe road intersection, development in wildland residential interface fire areas).
- Natural hazards (e.g. wildfire, flooding, steep slopes).
- Existing potential man-made hazards (e.g. high pressure gas lines, lack of fire protection, cumulative impacts).
- Traffic safety.
- Emergency vehicle access.
- Emergency medical response time.
- Cumulative impacts on groundwater from individual sewage disposal systems and/or individual wells.
- Any other item that endangers public health and safety.

Subdivision Public Hearing Procedures

A fundamental component of the subdivision review process is the opportunity for members of the public and interested groups to offer comments on the proposal. The opportunity to make comments in public is provided by the public hearing process. The Planning Board will also accept written comment received outside of the public hearing, but may set deadlines for the receipt of such comment. Under state law, the requirement to hold a public hearing does not apply to the first minor subdivision from a tract of record and other qualifying minors as may be determined per 76-3-609, MCA. A minor subdivision is defined as containing five or fewer lots.

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

1. Introduce public hearing
2. Explain subdivision review procedure and decision criteria
3. Planning Department staff report.
4. Applicant presentation.
5. Public testimony.
6. Close public hearing.

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

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

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

4.5 WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE (WUI)

Growth policies must include an evaluation of the potential for fire and wildland fire and whether or not there is a need to delineate the wildland-urban interface and adopt regulations requiring defensible space and adequate ingress and egress for fire suppression activities. This evaluation is included in Chapter 3, “Trends and Issues.” The county’s wildland-urban interface is mapped in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The Big Horn County Planning Board does not recommend additional regulations at this time.

4.6 GROWTH POLICY REVIEW – IMPLEMENTATION, REVISIONS AND AMENDMENT

Implementation Timetable

For each action strategy listed above, there is a timeframe. The intent is that all strategies will have been initiated within 1-2 years after adoption of this growth policy and that all will have been completed within 5 years, with the exception of those that are listed as “ongoing.”

Periodic Review of Growth Policy

The Planning Board will review the Growth Policy annually and issue a status report to the County Commissioners. The status report will include:

- Status of goals, objectives, and specific action strategies outlined in the Growth Policy,
- Assessment of work to be completed in the following year, and
- Evaluation of need to revise Growth Policy.

Conditions for Revising the Growth Policy

The Big Horn County Growth Policy provides a plan for the future based on existing conditions and projected trends. It cannot cover all potential future scenarios and thus needs to be flexible to deal with new issues as they arise.

Under the following conditions, the Planning Board will review the Growth Policy and determine if changes are needed:

- Implementation of major proposed actions outside of county authority, such as development of the proposed Tongue River Railroad, with potential to significantly affect implementation of the stated goals, policies, and strategies in this Growth Policy;
- Actions or events with potential to significantly alter the health, safety, and welfare of citizens that were inadequately addressed in the Growth Policy;
- Changes in state law regarding growth policies;
- Court cases and/or litigation that sets legal precedent in Montana for growth policies;
- Individual neighborhood plans developed in accordance with state law (76-1-601) are to be included as amendments to the current Growth Policy; or
- Planning Board evaluation of implementation measures and progress, and determination that modifications would enhance the effectiveness of the Growth Policy.

Process for Revising the Growth Policy

If the Planning Board determines that a revision to the Growth Policy is necessary, the Board will provide a written notice to the County Commissioners prior to commencing work on the revision and proceed with revisions if so requested by the County Commissioners.

The Planning Board will follow the process outlined in state law for adopting a growth policy (76-1-602 through 76-1-603) for any subsequent revisions. Once revisions are drafted, the Board will conduct a public hearing on proposed revisions and then by resolution make its recommendation to the County Commission. The County Commission will then make its decision to adopt, revise, or reject the changes as outlined in state law (76-1-604).

5. INVENTORY OF EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

5.1 LAND USE

Land Uses - General

The county is predominantly agricultural, with rangeland, irrigated cropland in the valleys and dryland crops elsewhere. According to the [2007 Census of Agriculture](#), Big Horn County had 2.90 million acres in agricultural production, up from 2.81 million acres in 2002. Total number of farms also increased from 584 in 2002 to 695 in 2007. The USDA report, “[Montana 2013 Agricultural Statistics](#)” indicated that in 2012, Big Horn County ranked 5th in the state for winter wheat production, 9th in barley production, 6th for alfalfa, and 3rd for cattle inventory.

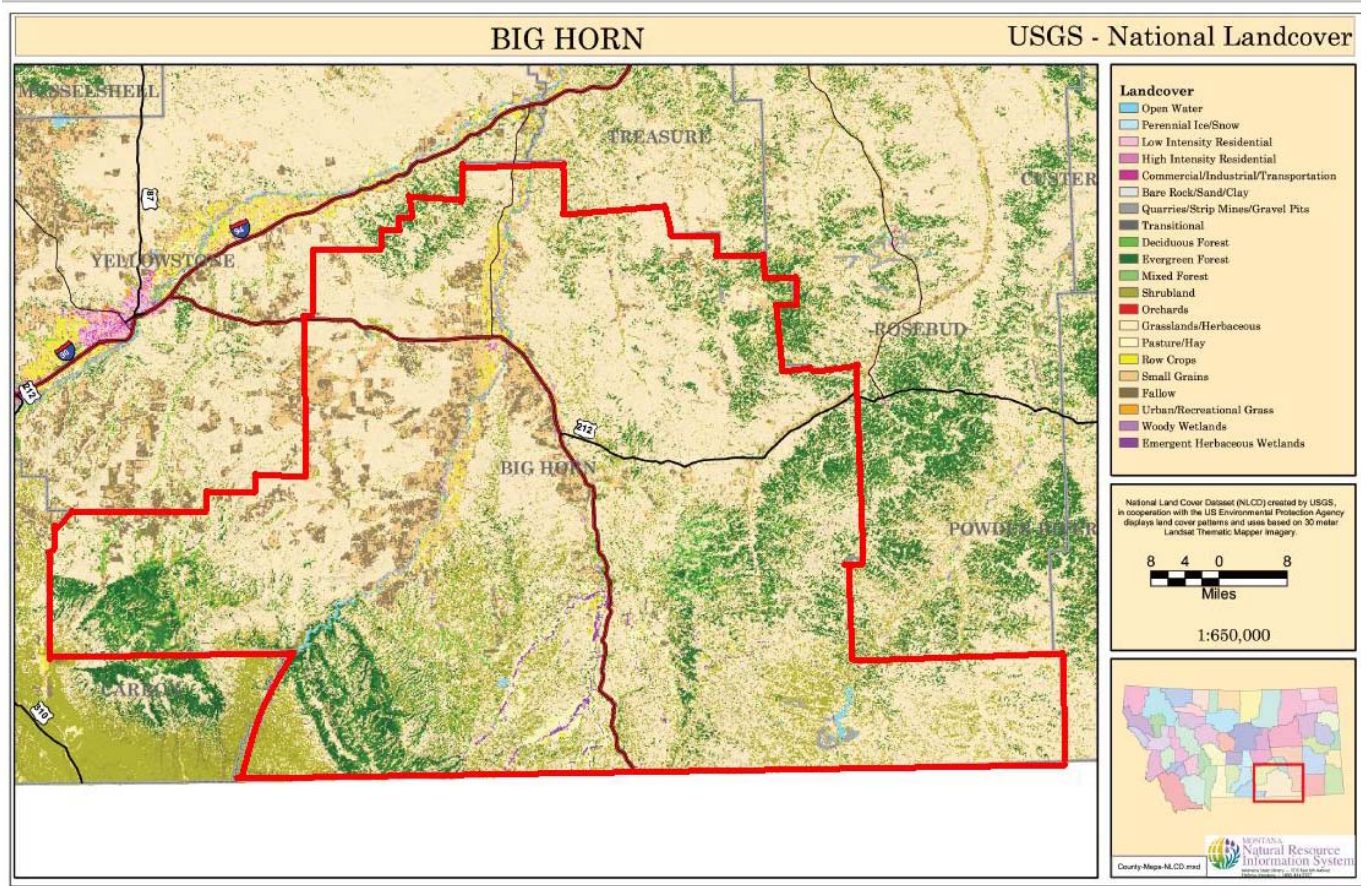


Figure 7: Landcover Types in Big Horn County

Source: Montana NRIS <http://nr.is.mt.gov/>

Residential and commercial land use occurs primarily in existing communities. Hardin has the largest concentration of population and commercial/industrial uses in the county. Crow Agency, Lodge Grass, Busby, Pryor, Fort Smith, St. Xavier, and Wyola are the other communities in the county. Muddy Cluster