

### 3.3 GROWTH POLICY IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

The 2002 Growth Policy included a number of goals and objectives. Appendix A includes all of the goals and implementation strategies of the 2002 Growth Policy. The completion status of the strategies is also included. A few of the projects have been completed, more have been partially completed, and some are ongoing. Some were never initiated. After reviewing implementation status of the 2002 Growth Policy, the planning board came to the conclusion that the long list of implementation strategies was perhaps overly ambitious given the limited resources (including few staff).

### 3.4 ANTICIPATING AND PREPARING FOR NATURAL DISASTERS

In 2013, Big Horn County adopted an update to the county's Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan and Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

#### Floods

Flooding can be severe in the county. In the spring of 2011, severe storms flooded much of central and south-central Montana. On May 26, 2011, the [Billings Gazette](#) reported that about 300 people were staying at a Red Cross Shelter set up in a residence hall at the Montana State University-

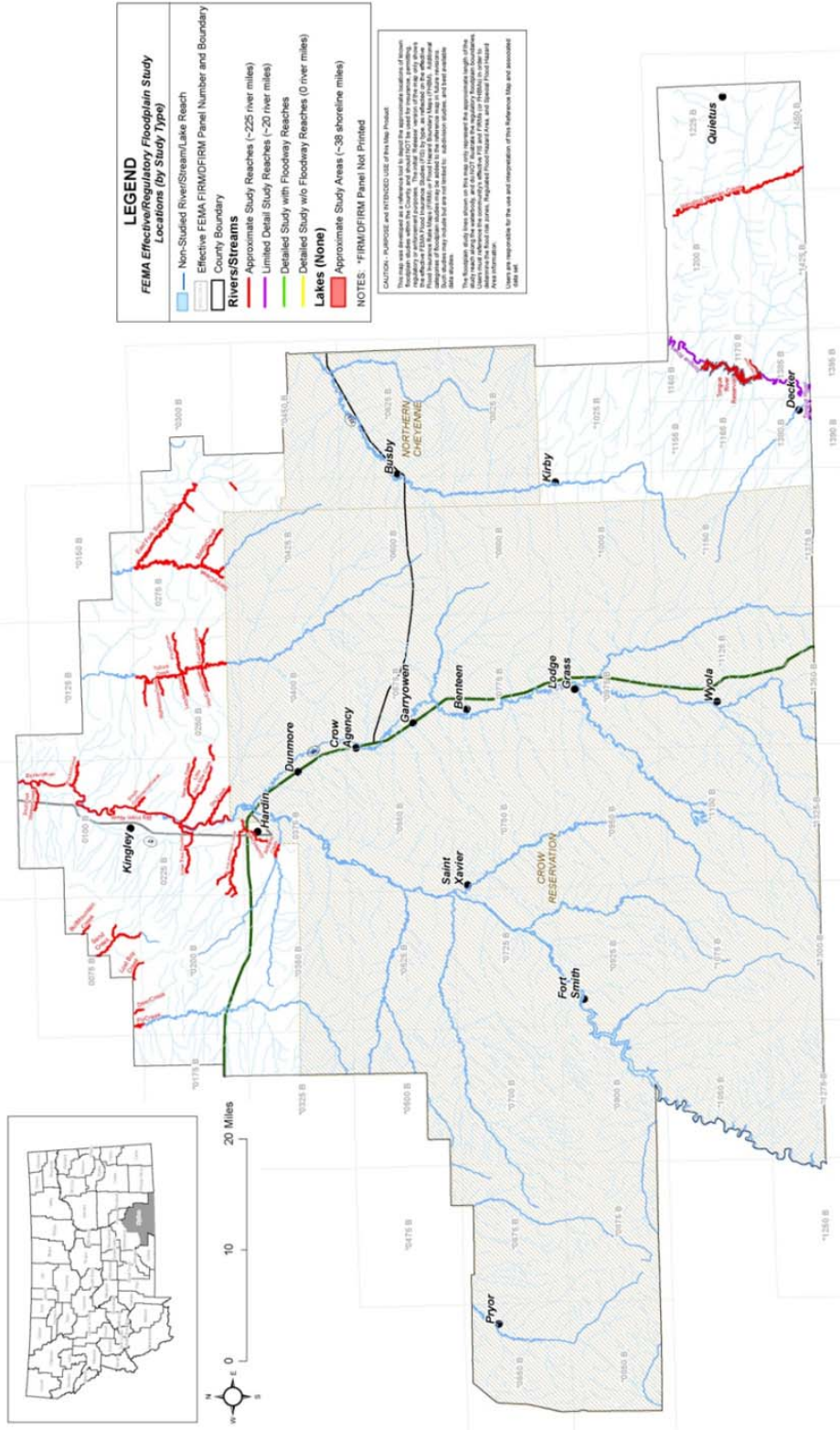


Confluence of Little Horn and Big Horn Rivers near Hardin, 2011  
Source: 2013 Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan for Big Horn County

Billings campus and most of the evacuees came from the Crow Reservation.

Although the county has floodplain regulations, it does not preclude development within the floodplain. Instead it sets some parameters for such development. New development is excluded within the floodway. Federal Emergency Management Agency “Insurance Rate Maps” or “FIRMs” do not exist for all areas of the county. Figure 6 shows the current floodplain study reference map for Big Horn County. The areas that are shaded do not have any floodplain mapping. The rest of the county has only has “Approximate” and “Limited Detail” level studies at this time. Not having a clear understanding of the floodplain delineation makes it more difficult to ensure that new development near rivers is situated as safely as possible.

# FLOODPLAIN STUDY REFERENCE MAP BIG HORN COUNTY, MONTANA (Community #300143) DRAFT



\* DENOTES FIRMD/FIRM Not Printed

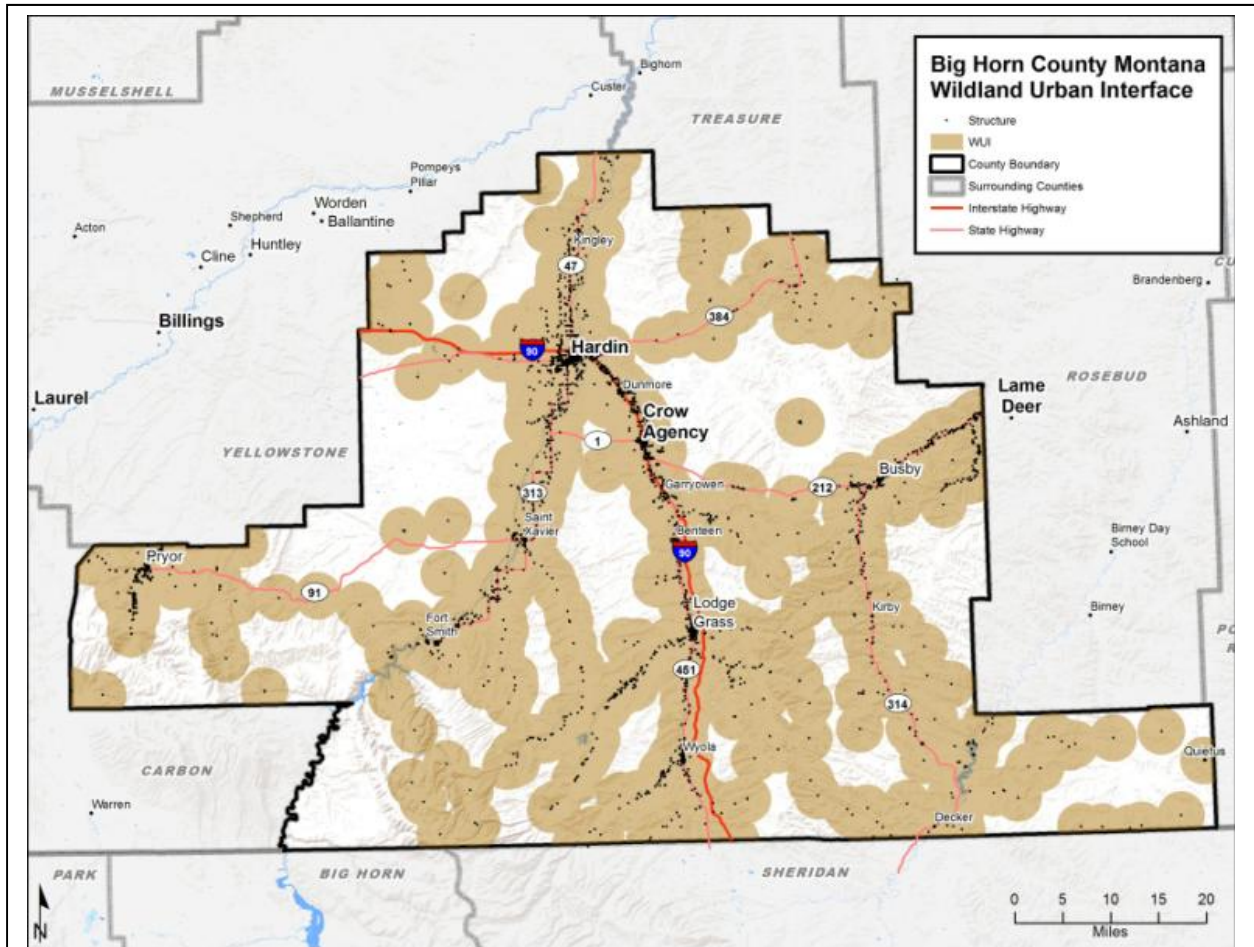
Release Date	Revisions	NO.	Description	Date	By
DRAFT					
Jan. 2011					

DNRC  
 REFERENCE Map produced by Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC),  
 Water Resources Division, Floodplain Management. Contact State Floodplain Engineer, 406-444-8664.

Figure 5: Floodplain Study Reference Map  
Source: Montana DNRC

## Wildland-Urban Interface

The 2013 Big Horn County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) indicates that all areas of Big Horn County are at risk for wildfire. The CWPP and the goals, strategies, and implementation measures included within the CWPP have been formally adopted by Big Horn County, Hardin, and Lodge Grass. The following provides a brief summary of that information and also addresses the requirements of state law (76-1-601(3)(j), MCA) to assess the need to delineate the wildland urban interface (WUI) and adopt regulations to address wildland fire in the WUI.



**Figure 6: Big Horn County Wildland Urban Interface**

Source: 2013 Big Horn County CWPP

The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) is defined as “the zone where structures and other human development meet and intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels.” As part of the CWPP, the county identified and mapped the WUI as shown in the map inset. It includes a three-mile buffer around structures because of the potential for grasses and other fuels immediately surrounding communities and for the speed at which fire can travel. For example, in 2003 the Little Hawk fire near Busby made a 3-mile run in 15 minutes. That combined with the long distances between fire



departments and response times that can be up to an hour factored into the determination to set the 3-mile buffer area. The Big Horn County Planning Board considered whether regulations should be adopted to require:

- 1) defensible space around structures;
- 2) adequate ingress and egress to and from structures and developments to facilitate fire suppression activities; and
- 3) adequate water supply for fire protection.

The Big Horn County Planning Board recognizes that the CWPP has addressed defensible space, ingress/egress, and water supply in goals and objectives as voluntary measures rather than regulations. The county's subdivision regulations have design standards for fire suppression access and water supply. The Big Horn County Planning Board does not recommend additional regulations at this time for the WUI.

### **3.5 PROJECTED FUTURE TRENDS - OVERVIEW**

Key developments in the county that could have significant effects for the future of the county include:

- Crow Tribe Water Rights Settlement and Compact
  - New rural water delivery system planned as part of the Crow Tribe Water Rights Settlement.
  - The compact also includes provisions for hydropower generation at Yellowtail Afterbay Dam, clean coal conversion, and renewable energy. Crow Tribe controls the water originating on the Reservation.
- Increased coal development resulting from the coal leasing agreement between the Crow Tribe and Cloud Peak Energy as well as increased production from existing mines
- Increased demand for gravel (needed for construction and road upkeep)
- Continued high proportion of persons less than 19 years of age and issues with high rates of school drop-out
- Increased numbers of seniors, aged 65 or older

- Increased truck and rail traffic—based on the 2010 Montana State Rail Plan, shipments by truck and rail from Montana are projected to nearly double by 2035, compared to 2002.

**Table 2: Montana Shipments by Weight**

<b>Montana Shipments by Weight 2002 and 2035 (Millions of Tons)</b>						
	2002			2035		
	Within State	From State	To State	Within State	From State	To State
Truck	36.6	7.2	8.6	92.7	15.6	26.0
Rail	4.4	48.1	1.6	1	71.8	6.5
Water	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Air, Air, and Truck	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1
Intermodal	0.2	0.6	0.2	1.1	0.9	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>41.4</b>	<b>56.1</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>95.0</b>	<b>88.6</b>	<b>33.2</b>

- Potential for wind generation projects—although no developments have begun as yet, there is anticipation that this could occur within the next 10 years. Big Horn County is among a handful of Montana counties that have high wind power in proximity to major electrical transmission lines. One of these lines crosses the area of the county near Fort Smith with the highest wind power.
- Potential to expand the county’s economic base with cultural tourism focused on historic and cultural sites and activities as well as recreational tourism focused on the county’s rivers and scenic resources
- Potential for damages associated with riverine flooding

Factors outside of the county that could affect future developments include:

- Commodity prices for agricultural products, coal, oil, gas – if natural gas prices were to go up, the coal bed methane development could resurge; high energy prices could make wind energy and other renewable energy projects more viable

## Land Use

Major new projects, such as new coal mines, and the projects anticipated as part of the Crow Tribe Water Settlement or from wind generation and renewable energy could result in significant effects to land use. There would be direct effects on-site, and indirect effects of increased demand for temporary or permanent worker housing. Temporary worker housing would be needed during the construction phase. Major new construction projects will increase demand for gravel, resulting in greater potential for compatibility issues with adjoining or nearby uses such as residential.

## Population

The current projection is for slow population decline in the future, with a continued large proportion of youth under age 20 and an increasing number of seniors. Major economic developments such as expanded coal mining or construction of a rural water delivery system could result in population