

Bonner County Planning Department

"Protecting property rights and enhancing property value"

1500 Highway 2, Suite 208, Sandpoint, Idaho 83864

Phone (208) 265-1458

Email: planning@bonnercountyid.gov - Web site: www.bonnercountyid.gov



BONNER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

COMPONENT: RECREATION

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Introduction

The number of visitors and residents using the area for recreation purposes demonstrates the importance of maintaining the area's outstanding healthy forests, watersheds, clear lakes, scenery, and native wildlife and fisheries. As the area's population and visitation inevitably increases, there will be a greater need/pressure to identify areas for businesses to establish to service the community, as well as, protect access to recreational opportunities while development occurs. The goals and policies in this plan strive to promote our need for diverse recreational opportunities while preserving the area's scenic character and ecological systems. The county should identify future areas where restaurants, lodging, services, community centers, and specialty shops could be established to meet the demands of recreational users.

Water-based commerce along the shoreline should be encouraged, so long as its operations do not degrade adjacent property values, degrade water-quality, or violate noise or light ordinances. These businesses must be properly licensed, insured, and where appropriate bonded like all commercial ventures in Bonner County.

Support the maintenance and retention of existing outdoor facilities such as public campgrounds, boat launch facilities, and trails. As future development occurs it is important that these areas be maintained and protected for future generations.

This component includes a list of parks, public lands, and campgrounds; parkways and scenic drives; trails; water-related recreation, including marinas/boat access, beaches/public access, fishing, and other water-related recreation activities; and other recreation activities, including downhill skiing and golf.

Chapter 1 - Parks, Public Lands, and Campgrounds

Section 1.1 - Parks

The following is a list of parks, consisting of Federal, State and City/County units, located in Bonner County.

FEDERAL (USFS)

- Ledgewood Picnic
- Maiden Rock
- Albeni Falls Dam

STATE

- Priest Lake State Park
 - Location: 33 miles north of Priest River on the east shore of Priest Lake
- Round Lake State Park

CITY/COUNTY

- Bonner County
 - Bonner Park West is located just west of the confluence of Priest River on the Pend Oreille River. It is a day-use area only. It is 2 to 3 acres in size and offers a boat launch, a swimming area, picnic tables, and running water.
- Sandpoint
 - The City of Sandpoint has eight parks, including City Beach and the Baldy Shooting Range.
- Priest River
 - Priest River has one city park located downtown on High Street. (City of Priest River)
 - The City has multiple pocket parks that are being improved on an ongoing basis.
 - The City has recently acquired 30+ acres of riverfront property at the confluence of the Priest River and Pend Oreille Rivers. Planning for a multi-use recreational area has begun.

Section 1.2 - Public Lands

The Idaho Panhandle National Forests are an aggregation of the Coeur d'Alene and portions of the Kaniksu and St. Joe National Forests. Approximately 2.5 million acres of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF) lie within the panhandle of northern Idaho and extend into eastern Washington and western Montana. Areas of the Kaniksu and Coeur d'Alene National Forests are located within Bonner County, representing about 19 percent of the Idaho Panhandle National Forest.

Within Bonner County, approximately 60 percent of all land area is publicly managed, and 40 percent is privately owned. All state and federal lands are open to public recreation including camping, hunting, fishing, photography, hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, wildlife observation, boating, skiing, rock climbing, and swimming. Outside of designated recreation areas there is a three-day maximum use for camping by an individual, persons, or group. No camping may occur within 100 feet of any development.

Section 1.3 - Campgrounds

The county abounds in camping opportunities that cater to every level of outdoor experience.

SANDPOINT AREA CAMPGROUNDS

Tables 1.3a and 1.3b are representative lists of the camping sites managed by a variety of government agencies.

Table 1.3a - Sandpoint Area Campgrounds

CAMPGROUND	LOCATION
Garfield Bay	14 Miles SE of Sandpoint on Garfield Bay Road
Green Bay	16 miles SE of Sandpoint
Porcupine Lake	25 miles E of Sandpoint
Samowen	17 miles E of Sandpoint
Whiskey Rock	30 miles SW of Clark Fork, via Road 278
Round Lake State Park	10 miles S of Sandpoint, 2 miles W of Dufort Road.
Albeni Cove	2 miles E of Newport off Highway 41
Priest River	1 Mile E of Priest River on Highway 2
Riley Creek	15 miles W of Sandpoint, 1 mile S of Laclede
Springy Point	4 miles SW of Sandpoint on Lakeshore Drive

(USFS, Idaho State Parks, and Army Corps of Engineers)

PRIEST LAKE AREA CAMPGROUNDS

Table 1.3b - Priest Lake Area Campgrounds

CAMPGROUND	LOCATION
Beaver Creek	39 miles N of Priest River, E on paved road for 12 miles
Luby Bay	29 miles N of Priest River, Nordman
Osprey	27 miles N of Priest River, Nordman
Outlet	26 miles N of Priest River, Coolin
Dickensheet	23 miles N of Priest River
Indian Creek	34 miles N of Priest River on the east side of Priest Lake
Squaw Bay	46 miles N of Priest River, Coolin
Lionhead	46 miles N of Priest River at the north end of Priest Lake
Navigation	Upper Priest Lake
Plowboy	Upper Priest Lake, at the mouth of the thoroughfare
Reeder Bay	30 miles N of Priest River

(USFS, Idaho State Parks, and Army Corps of Engineers)

Chapter 2 - Trails

Section 2.1 - Jurisdiction (Federal, State and Local)

Within the Idaho Panhandle National Forest there are 2,016 miles of trails. For winter users, 78 miles of cross-country ski trails and 1,007 miles of groomed snowmobile trails are available. (GORP)

Considering that more than 60 percent of Bonner County is publicly managed, it is easy to understand why there are hundreds of trails for various recreational purposes in Bonner County. Table 3.1 lists a few of the more popular and accessible developed trail systems and the recreational opportunities of each.

Table 2.1 - Bonner County Trail Systems

TRAIL	LOCATION
Granite Pass System	3 mi. N of Nordman
Hanna Flat	4 mi. S of Nordman
Priest Lake State Park	33 mi. N of Priest River on State Hwy. 57
Chipmunk Rapids	21 mi. N of Priest River on State Hwy. 57
Schweitzer Mtn. Resort	11 mi. NW of Sandpoint off US Hwy. 95
Sunnyside Road Hwy. 200 Loop	Hwy. 200 East 9.5 to road cut off
Lake Shore Dr./Dufort Road Round Lake Loop	Bike path begins behind Sandpoint Courthouse
Trestle Creek Rd.	12 mi. E of Sandpoint
Gold Hill	6 mi. SE of Sandpoint
Strong Creek Trail 444 Beetop-Round-top Trail 120	Hwy. 200 E to Hope up Strong Creek
Mineral Point	1 mi. N of Garfield Bay
Round Lake State Park	10 mi. S of Sandpoint off US Hwy. 95
Johnson Creek/Dry Crk. System	3 mi. SW of Clark Fork
Johnson Cabin Trail	From Clark Fork take Johnson Creek Road 278, 16 mi. to trail
Stoneridge Resort, Blanchard	40 mi. N of Coeur d'Alene

(USFS, Idaho State Parks, Army Corps of Engineers, Hagadone Directories)

Chapter 3 - Water Related Recreation

Section 3.1 - Marinas/Boat Access

Table 3.1 lists the county facilities available for accessing water recreation. Fifty sites allow access to all the major water bodies.

Table 3.1 – Water Recreation Access Facilities

Body of Water	Location of Facility
Priest Lake	Lionhead-Priest Lake State Park
Priest Lake	Indian Creek-Priest Lake State Park
Priest Lake	Blue Diamond Marina (Fee ramp)
Priest Lake	Cavanaugh Bay Marina (Fee ramp)
Priest Lake	Coolin
Chase Lake	Chase Lake
Priest Lake	Bishop's Marina
Priest Lake	Outlet Resort (Fee ramp)
Priest Lake	Hill's Resort (Fee ramp)
Priest Lake	Kalispell Boat Launch (Fee ramp)
Priest Lake	Elkin's Resort (Fee ramp)
Priest Lake	Grandview (Fee ramp)
Priest Lake	Priest Lake Marina (fee ramp)
Priest Lake	Kaniksu Resort
Priest Lake	Granite Creek Marina (fee ramp)
Priest Lake	North Tule Bay/Beaver Creek
Freeman Lake	Freeman Lake
Pend Oreille River	Albeni Cove Recreation Area
Pend Oreille River	Dock-N-Shop
Pend Oreille River	Bonner Park West
Pend Oreille River	Priest River Recreation Area
Pend Oreille River	Thama
Pend Oreille River	Riley Creek Recreation Area
Pend Oreille River	Laclede
Pend Oreille River	Willow Bay Marina
Pend Oreille River	Morton Slough Access Area
Jewel Lake	Jewel Lake
Round Lake	Round Lake State Park (fee ramp)
Cocolalla Lake	Cocolalla
Mirror Lake	Mirror Lake
Shepherd Lake	Shepherd Lake
Body of Water	Location of Facility
Kelso Lake	Kelso Lake
Granite Lake	Granite Lake

(Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, 1998)

Section 3.2 - Beaches

LAKE PEND OREILLE

Lake Pend Oreille is the largest lake in Idaho. It is approximately 43 miles long, 1,000 feet deep, and nearly 6 miles wide in some locations. Lake Pend Oreille has 114 miles of shoreline. There are many public and private beaches surrounding the lake ranging from sandy to rocky.

Undeveloped picnic sites may be found along the Monarch Mountains, with a number of small vest-pocket beaches from Johnson Creek, at the mouth of the Clark Fork, to Kilroy Bay. Generally, these beaches are accessible only by boat. (*Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce*)

PRIEST LAKE

Priest Lake is one of the three largest lakes in the Idaho Panhandle and is a popular recreation area. Priest Lake is actually two lakes, Upper and Lower Priest Lake, connected by a 2.5-mile thoroughfare. The lake is 25 miles long with 80 miles of shoreline, much of it publicly managed. The east shore was predominantly state property, much of which was leased to cabin owners. However, the state has now sold the leased land at auctions. The eastside side is part of the Priest Lake State Forest, while the western shore is predominantly U.S. Forest Service lands. Numerous campgrounds and resorts are available to visitors. There are many cabins on the westside that are held by federal permit holders.

Section 3.3 - Fishing

Bonner County is home to some of the finest fisheries in the state, and five current state record fish came from the County. It offers two of the largest lakes in the state, Lake Pend Oreille and Priest Lake, numerous lowland and alpine lakes, and hundreds of miles of streams and rivers. Bonner County offers numerous opportunities for all types of fishing such as trolling for trophy trout and kokanee, ice fishing, shore fishing on the smaller lakes, spin casting or fly casting on the many streams and rivers, and fishing for bass and panfish. Game species in the County include cutthroat trout, bull trout (ESA-listed; closed to harvest), Mackinaw (lake trout), rainbow trout, kokanee, brown trout, whitefish, walleye and northern pike.

Section 3.4 - Other Water Related Recreational Activities

BOATING/WATERSKIING

More than half of all surface water in Idaho is located in Northern Idaho. Lake Pend Oreille and Priest Lake offer year-round activities for boaters. Good access to ramps, marinas, floating and shoreline restaurants, and resorts enhance recreational boating on both lakes. Cocolalla Lake is also popular for small boats taking part in waterskiing and fishing. (*Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce*)

CANOEING/KAYAKING

Canoeing and flat water kayaking is popular on all of Bonner County waters; however, Kelso, Jewel, Freeman, Gamlin, and Round Lakes all offer passive boaters an opportunity to avoid motorized boats. Canoeing and flat water kayaking is popular in the thoroughfare up to Upper Priest Lake. Motorized boats are allowed to travel the thoroughfare, but it is a no-wake area. Though Bonner County rivers

are not well- known for their whitewater, whitewater kayaking can be found on the Priest River below the Dickensheet unit of Priest Lake State Park in the spring. Priest River is canoeable by experienced boaters for 44 miles below the outlet of Priest Lake. The Upper Priest River has been proposed for classification as a Wild and Scenic River. (GORP)

RIVER RAFTING

Whitewater rafting can be experienced on the Priest River down river from the Dickensheet Unit of Priest Lake State Park in the spring.

JET SKIING

People use jet skis on all of Bonner County's lakes that allow motorized boats. Jet-ski operators are subject to all rules and requirements for motorized vessels on Bonner County waters.

(Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, 1998)

Chapter 4 - Other Recreational Activities/ Facilities

Section 4.1 - Downhill Skiing

Schweitzer Mountain Resort offers downhill skiers and snowboarders.. The mountain has a top elevation of 6,400 feet and a vertical drop of 2,400 feet. Schweitzer Mountain Resort is located 11 miles northwest of the city of Sandpoint. Ski season usually runs from late November through early April.

Section 4.2 - Cross Country Skiing

Schweitzer Mountain Resort offers groomed track for Nordic skiing and diagonal stride.

Section 4.3 - Golfing

Bonner County has four 18-hole golf courses, Hidden Lakes Golf Resort and the Idaho Club in Sandpoint, Priest Lake Golf Course at Priest Lake and the Stoneridge Country Club near Blanchard. The courses are open to the public. There are three 9-hole courses in Bonner County: the Ranch Club Golf Course in Priest River, the Elks Golf Course in Sandpoint, and Midas Golf Course in Sagle.

Section 4.4 - County Fairgrounds

The County Fairgrounds is located in Sandpoint on approximately 40 acres.

Section 4.5 - Equestrian

In addition to equestrian events that are held at the County Fairgrounds, there are many horseback riding trails in Bonner County.

Contact the North Idaho Back Country Horseman Association or the US Forest Service for more information on trails that are in Bonner County (USFS).

Section 4.6 - Hunting

Bonner County offers some of the finest big game hunting in the State of Idaho. Big game species to pursue include elk, white-tailed deer, mule deer, black bear, mountain lion, and wolf. Viewable mountain goat and grizzly bear populations exist around Bonner County and excellent moose hunting opportunities are offered through a controlled hunt system. Upland birds include forest grouse, California quail, pheasants, and wild turkey. Waterfowl opportunities abound on the Clark Fork and Pend Oreille Rivers, as well as Lake Pend Oreille.

Section 4.7 - Berry Picking and Mushrooming

Huckleberry picking is a favorite activity in Bonner County, bringing visitors from all over. Priest Lake is nationally known to be one of the most popular areas for huckleberries. The picking season usually starts in July and lasts until early September. Other popular berry crops that can be found in the

Bonner County area include thimbleberries, wild strawberries, blueberries, and currants.

Mushroom picking in Bonner County is also growing in popularity. Morels, shaggy manes, and corals are just some of the popular fungi in the area. The mushroom picking season can vary depending upon the weather and how much snow cover is in the area. The season can range from as early as April and extend into late summer. (USFS)

Section 4.8 - Snow Camping

Round Lake State Park and Indian Creek State Park are open year-round. (Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation)

Section 4.9 - Dog Sled Racing

The annual Pacific West Coast Sled Dog Races are held in February in Nordman. This event brings exhibitors and spectators from all around. Cross country races, freight pulling races, and ski-joring can all be seen at this annual event.