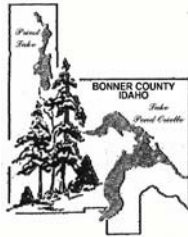


**Land Use Component  
Bonner County Comprehensive Plan**

# Land Use Component Bonner County Comprehensive Plan

Adopted by Resolution of the Bonner County Board of Commissioners  
December 13, 2005

Resolution #05-87



**BONNER COUNTY**  
**PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

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# LAND USE COMPONENT

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This component includes an analysis of natural land types, existing land covers and uses, and the intrinsic suitability of lands for uses such as agriculture, forestry, mineral exploration and extraction, preservation, recreation, housing, commerce, industry, and public facilities. This component includes a map indicating suitable projected land uses for the jurisdiction.

## CHAPTER 1 - NATURAL LAND TYPES

Bonner County is a natural resource-rich county located in the Panhandle of Idaho, about 34 miles south of the Canadian border. Sandpoint is the county seat. About 9.1 percent, or 183 square miles, of Bonner County's total area is surface water, the most of any Idaho county (*County Profiles of Idaho, 1999*). Bonner County's Lake Pend Oreille is Idaho's largest natural lake, covering 90,000 acres and reaching depths of about 1,200 feet. Priest Lake and Upper Priest Lake in the northwestern portion of the County are known for their exceptionally high water quality and natural aesthetics. Lower Priest Lake is the third largest natural lake entirely within Idaho.

The diversity of habitat in Bonner County supports a wide variety of fish, and its fishing resources provide economic, aesthetic, and recreational value to the County. The varied vegetation and topography of this area also offers diverse habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. The plentiful waters provided by the County's rivers, lakes, and streams are wintering and breeding grounds for hundreds of bald eagles and ospreys and thousands of waterfowl. Forested foothills, mountains and broad grass valleys provide habitat for moose, bear, elk, and deer and countless species of song birds, fur-bearing mammals, predators, and non-game animals. Wildlife is an important resource to Bonner County in terms of aesthetic values, economics, and recreation.

About 40 percent of Bonner County is private land, while the remainder is held by the federal government (44.4 percent), the state (15.2 percent) and municipalities (1%).

Bonner County's roughly 1,738 square miles or 1.12 million acres consist of a diverse range of land types from river bottoms at an elevation of 2,062 feet above sea level to mountaintops at 6,600 feet above sea level and from grizzly bear habitat to the concrete and asphalt travelways of its developed small cities.

## CHAPTER 2 - EXISTING LAND COVER

With the state and federal government in ownership of the majority of land in Bonner County, it is not surprising that the vast majority of the land cover is forested. The following map, *Current Land Cover of Bonner County*, provides a graphic representation of the expanse of forest land in the County. The map represents a general overview of land coverage in Bonner County and is not intended for site-specific analyses. However, the map is useful snapshot of the County. The land coverage data were developed for the Idaho “Gap Analysis Project” and are based on satellite imagery.

### **Section 2.1 - A Synopsis of the Gap Analysis Program and Land Cover Mapping**

Gap Analysis was developed as a scientific means of assessing the extent to which native animal and plant species are being protected. Gap Analysis uses three main data layers: 1) a land cover layer; 2) a composite layer showing the predicted distributions of vertebrate species; and 3) a third layer showing the distribution of management areas aimed at maintaining biodiversity. By overlaying these layers in a geographic information system (GIS), it is possible to identify “conservation gaps,” or species and plant communities that lack representation on lands managed for conservation.

The base map on which the analysis relies is a layer of current land cover. Projects are conducted at the state level, though regions use similar classification schemes to facilitate multi-state analyses. Land cover is mapped using Landsat Thematic Mapper satellite imagery (30m resolution) with a minimum mapping unit of 2 hectares (5 acres). Data are produced with an intended application at geographic areas from several hundred thousand to millions of hectares in size. Because of this, the data provide a generalized view. The data are also based on the USGS 1:100,000 scale of mapping in both detail and precision.

The Idaho Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit's Landscape Dynamics Lab compiled the Idaho Land Cover Classification from Redmond et al.'s (1996) Current Vegetation Map of Northern Idaho and Western Montana and Homer's (1998) Idaho/Western Wyoming Land cover Classification. Both sources used primarily 1992 and 1993 satellite imagery acquired during the growing season (June-Sept). However, to get a cloud-free coverage, some images from 1991 and 1995 had to be used. These classifications were “crosswalked” and merged to produce a unified land cover map for Idaho. The resulting land cover data set consists of 82 classes and is the highest resolution, continuous land cover map yet to be produced for Idaho. For the 5 scenes combined to create northern Idaho land cover map, producer’s accuracy ranged from 53.35% to 71.23%

### **Section 2.2 - Scale and Use of GAP Land Cover Data**

Recognizing that Gap would be the first, and for many years likely the only, source of statewide biological GIS maps, the data were created with the expectation that they would be used for other applications. The user must determine the appropriate use and scale to which the data may be applied.

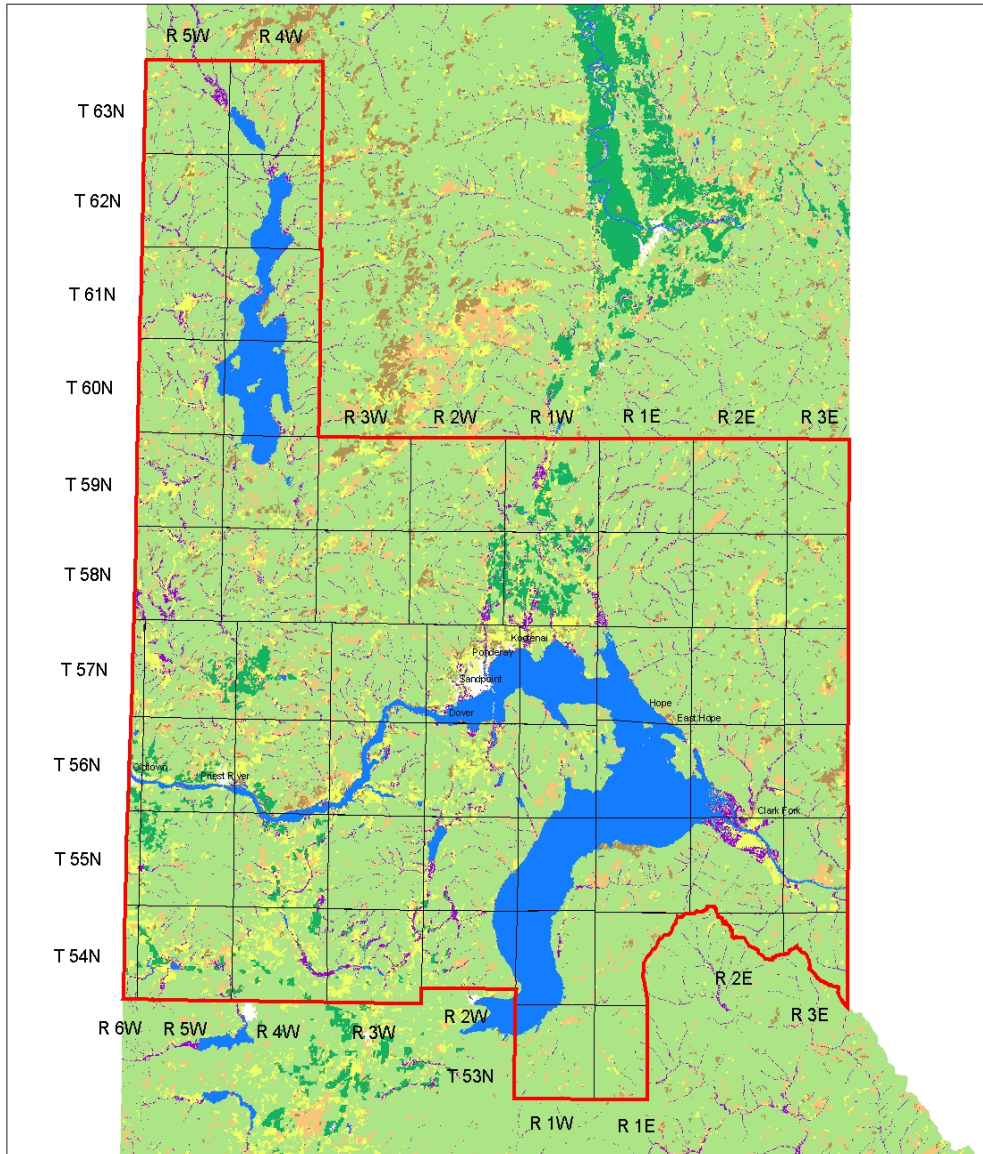
Appropriate uses include statewide biodiversity planning, regional (Councils of Government or ecoregional) planning, regional habitat conservation planning, county comprehensive planning, and large-

area resource management planning. Inappropriate uses include using the data as a "content" map for small areas (less than thousands of hectares), typically requiring mapping resolution at 1:24,000 scale, establishing definite occurrence or nonoccurrence of any feature for an exact geographic area, or combining it with other data finer than 1:100,000 scale to produce new hybrid maps or answer queries resulting in precise measurements. (National Gap Analysis Program, Idaho Gap Analysis Project.) Table 2.1 provides the coverage units and descriptions of each category.

Table 2.1

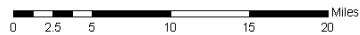
<i><b>Idaho Vegetation and Land Cover Classification System Land Cover Represented in Bonner County</b></i>	
<i><b>Land Cover Class</b></i>	<i><b>Description</b></i>
<b>1000: Urban &amp; Developed Land</b>	Urban (towns and cities), mines, airports, gravel pits, golf courses.
<b>2000: Agricultural Land</b>	Row crops, irrigated pasture and hay fields, dry farm crops and fallow fields.
<b>3100: Grasslands</b>	Areas dominated by grass, grass-like, or forb vegetation with a tree or shrub component not exceeding 26 % cover.
<b>3200/3300: Upland Shrubland</b>	Areas dominated by shrubs that generally exceed 0.5 meter in height when mature, with a total canopy cover of 26 % or more. A tree canopy cover of 26 % or less may be present.
<b>4000 Upland Forest</b>	Broadleaf Forest, Needleleaf Forest, Mixed Needleleaf/Broadleaf Forest.
<b>5000: Water</b>	Surface water.
<b>6000 Riparian and Wetland Areas</b>	Description: Forested Riparian, Non-forested Riparian, and Wetlands.
<b>7000 Barren Land</b>	Description: Sand Dune, Vegetated Sand Dune, Exposed Rock, Lava, Vegetated Lava, Mixed Barren Land (exposed soil with less than 5% total vegetative cover), Shoreline and Stream Gravel Bars.

## Current Land Cover of Bonner County



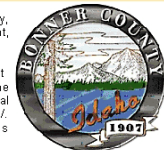
- Land Cover Class**
- Agricultural
  - Barren Land
  - Grasslands
  - Riparian & Wetlands
  - Upland Forest
  - Upland Shrubland
  - Urban & Developed
  - Water

- Townships
- County boundary



**MAP DISCLAIMER:** This map is intended for a general overview of land coverage in Bonner County, and is not meant to be used for site-specific analyses. Created by Bonner County Planning Department, December 15, 2004.

**NOTES:** Land cover data were developed for the Idaho Gap Analysis Project and are based on Landsat Thematic Mapper satellite imagery acquired primarily from 1992 and 1993. Data are also based on the U.S. Geological Survey 1:100,000 scale of mapping in both detail and precision. Please refer to the final Idaho Gap Analysis Report for more information, located at <http://www.wildlife.uidaho.edu/idgap/>. The Idaho Gap Analysis Project is a state project of the Gap Analysis Program of the Biological Resources Division, U.S. Geological Survey.



## CHAPTER 3 - EXISTING LAND USE

Table 3.1 echoes the GAP analysis data, showing the bulk of the land (84.4%) to be covered in forest. Surface water accounts for 9.1% of the land use. Urban land coverage is a minor percentage of the overall land coverage, reinforcing the fact that the County remains rural in nature.

Table 3.1

<i><b>Bonner County Land Use</b></i>		
<i><b>Land Use Type</b></i>	<i><b>Acres</b></i>	<i><b>Percent</b></i>
Urban Land	3,400	0.3%
Agricultural	69,700	5.7%
Rangeland	0	0%
Forest	1,034,200	84.8%
Water	110,700	9.1%
Wetland	1,200	0.1%
Barren Land	0	0%
Tundra	0	0%
Perennial Snow	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	1,219,200*	100%

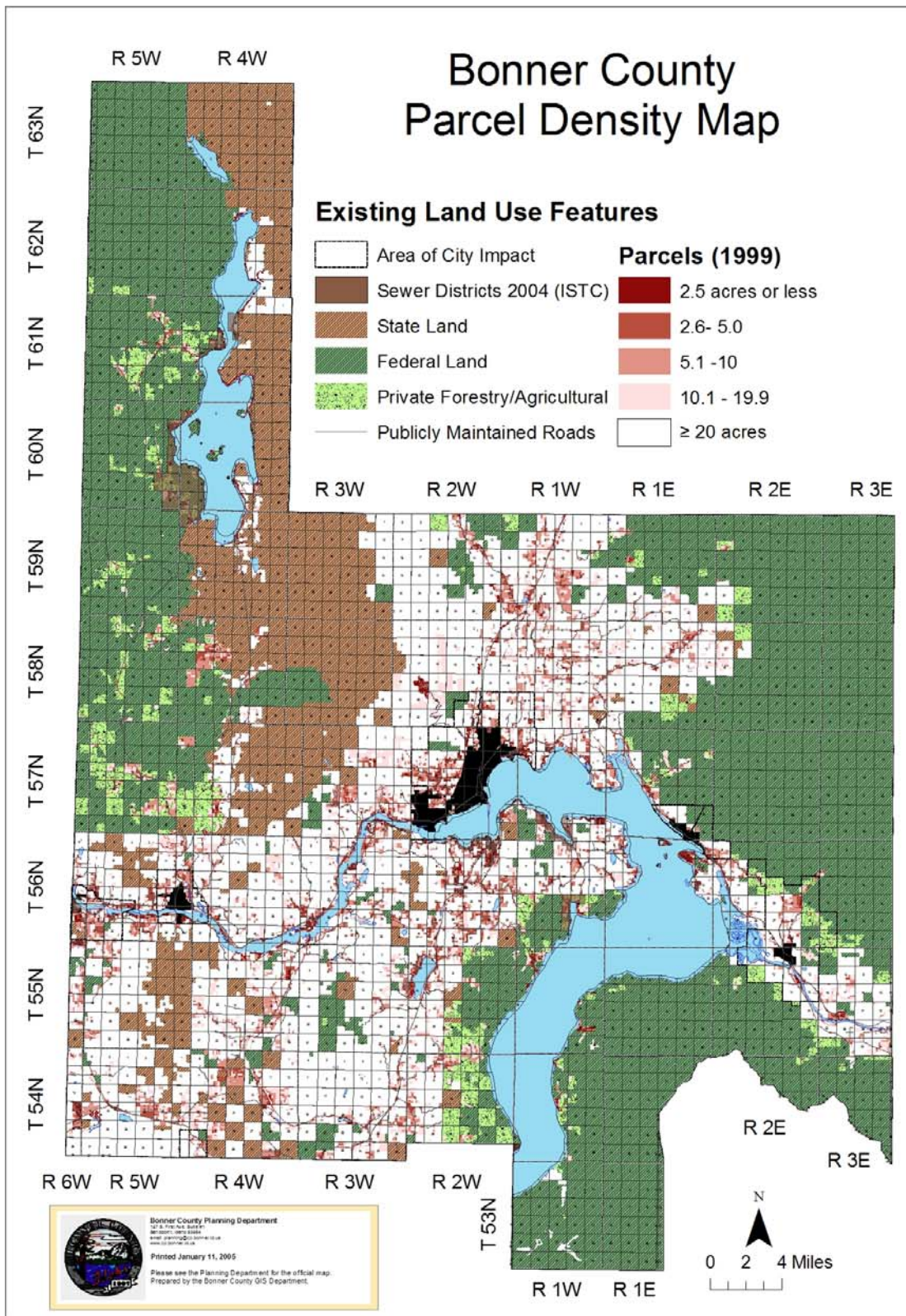
(Idaho Department of Commerce & Labor, USGS land use/cover classification system) \*The water category and rounding and estimating of satellite-based data results in slightly higher totals for land use



## CHAPTER 4 - EXISTING LAND DENSITY

The majority of the land within Bonner County is held in large, consolidated parcels owned either by the state or federal government. The breakdown of the ownership is: **Federal land:** 492,593 acres or 44.43% (BLM, 11,162 acres; National Forest, 472,575 acres; Other, 8,856;) **State Land:** 170,053 or 15.3% (State endowment land, 167,640 acres; Fish & Game, 1,415 acres; Parks & Recreation, 803 acres; University of Idaho land, 195 acres). **County land:** 4,521 acres; **Municipal land:** 4,117 acres; **Private land:** 440,780 or 39.6% (County Profiles of Idaho).

The following parcel density map provides a graphic picture of the developed and subdivided areas of Bonner County. The higher density subdivisions of private land (2.5 acres and less) are centered around the County's nine incorporated cities and scattered historic townsites (Coolin, Blanchard, Lakeview, etc.) and waterfront developments. Schweitzer Mountain and Sagle, south of Sandpoint, are two other areas of higher density land development.



## CHAPTER 5 - LAND SUITABILITY

Idaho Code §67-65-9(e) requires communities examine the “intrinsic” suitability of lands for uses such as agriculture, forestry, mineral exploration and extraction, preservation, recreation, housing, commerce, industry and public facilities.

Intrinsic means “belonging to the essential nature or constitution of a thing” (Merriam Webster). Through the public meeting process, the County has examined the essential elements necessary to make each of the categories of land uses suitable.

### **Section 5.1 Agriculture**

Only about 65,565 acres, or about 6% of the soils studied in Bonner County meet the requirements for prime farmland (Natural Resources component of the Bonner County Comprehensive Plan). This acreage is scattered throughout Bonner County, but most of it is in the southwestern and north-central portions of the County. About one-third of this prime farmland is used for crops and pasture. The balance is woodland. The main crops grown on this land are spring wheat, oats, barley, and grass-legume hay. A total of 12 soil types are listed as farmland of statewide importance. There are 70,285 acres of land in Bonner County which has a soil type considered to be of agricultural importance, though not necessarily listed as “prime” by the soil survey (Wood).

Bonner County has mirrored the national trends in experiencing a decline in the farm/ranch acreage and farm-based incomes over the past decades. The total acres in farms dropped from 150,021 acres in 1992 to 98,662 in 1997 (County Profiles in Idaho). The number of small farms (up to 49 acres) has risen modestly over a decade from 1987 to 1997, but the number of individuals who claimed farming as a principal occupation dropped from 245 to 217 over this same time frame.

Bonner County’s original Comprehensive Plan of 1978 did not provide for a particularized category of land use for either agriculture or forestry. The lowest density provided for one dwelling unit per 5 acres, yet a 10-acre minimum “Agricultural” zoning district was formed in 1980 to “preserve, protect and maintain areas that are rural in character where viable agricultural pursuits can be economically feasible” (Bonner County 1980 zoning code). The 1978 plan acknowledged that farming was “on the decline” in the decade prior to the adoption of the comprehensive plan. One reason cited was the demand for residential parcels, which caused larger tracts of land to be subdivided.

During workshops on the update of the comprehensive plan in 2005, members of the agricultural community met with the Planning & Zoning Commission and urged the County to take steps to preserve agricultural lands. Testimony from the public included concerns that the 10-acre minimums are too small for viable agricultural pursuits, with the exception of berry farms, hobby farms or small horse breeding operations, a letter to the Commission stated (Wood).

Farmers and ranchers have begun to feel the effects of the County’s growth, as “open green spaces or agricultural districts of Bonner County are being sacrificed or destroyed by urban sprawl or development.” Over the past four years, Bonner County Assessor records show a loss of 6,804 acres of

land classified as “agricultural” in a four-year period (Wood).

Members of the agricultural community have urged the County to increase the minimum acreage for agricultural areas to 20 acres. Ten acre parcels are too small to be feasible for viable economic agricultural operations, and often encourage the spread of noxious weeds because they are too small to farm but too big to adequately care for by the rural residential landowner, they testified (Wood).

The land cover map confirms agricultural lands are generally located in the north-central portion of the County, the western border with Washington state, an area north of the city of Priest River and areas south of the Pend Oreille River on the western side of Bonner County. Two large areas in the “Selle” area north of Sandpoint and south of the Pend Oreille River in the Hoodoo/Horn Mountain area coincide with the current Agricultural zoning district.

The prime agricultural land soils were mapped by Bonner County in the Natural Resources component of the Comprehensive Plan. The County also created an overlay map of the agricultural soils for analysis of the proposed land use. These soils are shown on the Projected Land Use Map in a stippled pattern.

## **Section 5.2 Forestry**

Though forest lands cover nearly 85% of the County’s land base, the 1978 Comprehensive Plan did not designate timber production areas or prime forest land in the plan. The plan noted a trend toward “subdividing larger wood lots into five, ten, and twenty acre parcels which effectively takes this part of the resource out of production. Timber is Bonner Counties (sic) primary renewable resource. Timber conservation management should be encouraged on both public and private lands” (Bonner County, 1978).

The original plan and resulting zoning districts did not specifically acknowledge a forest land designation, despite a recognition that the County’s forest land was being impacted by smaller parcel subdivisions. The Agricultural district specifically permits forestry, but set the density for the district at 10 acres.

A variety of tree species grow in Bonner County, with Douglas fir, lodgepole pine and ponderosa pine predominating the lower flats and benches. Conifer forests in the Pend Oreille Key Watershed consist of mixed stands, typified by the stands of western red cedar/western hemlock; stands of co-dominant Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*); and stands of Douglas-fir, western larch (*Larix occidentalis*), lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*), and western white pine (*Pinus monticola*). Dense stands of Douglas fir, larch, and lodgepole are characteristic of slopes with north and east aspects. Relatively open stands of Douglas fir and ponderosa pine are typical on the warmer, drier slopes with south and west aspects. (Bonner County, Natural Resources Component).

In the Priest Lake Basin area, western white pine, grand fir, western hemlock, Douglas fir, and western larch are the main species, with the Douglas fir and ponderosa pine growing on the drier south and west facing slopes. Western red cedar grows on the wetter sites, both on the lower slopes and the bottomland soils. Patches of old-growth cedar have survived forest fires. This mixed species forest generally is located at elevations of as much as 5,000 feet. Above 5,000 feet Englemann spruce and subalpine fir become the predominant tree species (USDA NRCS). Brush fields blanket old burn areas, and rangelands

comprise the remainder of the basin's vegetative cover (Idaho Water Resources Board, 1995).

In the eastern part of the County, where annual precipitation exceeds 35 inches, annual growth rates for western white pine and grand fir are the highest. The benches on both sides of the Clark Fork River are excellent growing sites for mixed species forest. (USDA NRCS)

Bonner County recognizes the enormous impact the forest lands have on its community, with 1 million acres of land devoted to forest land and forest production. The impact of forest land subdivision and intrusion of smaller-acreage land divisions into federal and state forest lands has been a focal point during special meetings with the Planning & Zoning Commission and U.S. Forest Service and Department of Lands representatives during 2004 and 2005.

Wildland/urban interface management and the "rapid urbanization and subdivision development" of forest lands are key issues that state and federal programs will address together in the next few years (Idaho Department of Lands). Idaho's Forest Legacy program was established to promote forest land protection and to "ascertain and protect" environmentally important forest areas that are threatened by conversion to non-forest uses. Forest lands are recognized as assets that provide direct economic benefits from timber production, grazing land, recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat and aesthetic values. "Unfortunately, the increase in monetary value and the inevitable development of this land threatens all that makes it attractive, including sustained wildlife, scenic and timber values" (Idaho Forest Legacy Program). The program recognizes that most forest lands in the country are private, and landowners face growing financial pressures to convert lands from the forest base to residential or commercial uses.

### **5.3 Mineral Exploration & Extraction**

Most of Bonner County's mining activity is limited to sand, rock, gravel and clay exploration and extraction. A map of the sources and active mines has been provided in the Natural Resources Component of the Comprehensive Plan. Sand and gravel deposits are plentiful almost everywhere at the lower elevations in the Bonner County area. There are active mining operations throughout the County, with noted resources in the Colburn, Sagle and Dover areas, the Priest Lake basin, Careywood and south of the Oldtown/Priest River area. Clay sources are located in the Clark Fork and Cabinet Mountain vicinity. A few mining operations extract rock and riverbed stones for decorative uses.

As of 2003, reclamation plans had been filed with the State of Idaho for approximately 2,205 acres of land representing about 95 mining sites in Bonner County. The acreage represents only those operations which have filed reclamation plans with the state.

Bonner County zoning regulations require conditional use permits for mining activities to provide a review of potential impacts from dust, traffic, noise, blasting and use of water resources. The suitability of sites for mining activities are generally based on where the resources are encountered. Consideration in the location of future mining operations should be given to the proximity of operations to high density residential development, sensitive wildlife habitat, surface and ground water and transportation networks.

## **5.4 Preservation**

Both public and private entities have taken the initiative to preserve structures and lands that offer unique cultural or environmental features or provide open space. The “Special Areas or Sites” component of the Comprehensive Plan provides information on the various significant archaeological, ecological, wildlife, and scenic sites that have been recognized in Bonner County as unique and important to preserve. Public testimony has also prompted Bonner County to encourage voluntary conservation easements, land trusts and other private and public land conservation programs as tools to preserve open space and productive forest and farm lands and to protect sensitive areas such as wetlands, floodplains, or critical wildlife habitat. Bonner County should also consider avenues to create incentives for land conservation through its zoning and subdivision laws (Natural Resources policy statement, Bonner County Comprehensive Plan, goals and objectives). Preservation of unique natural and cultural features and ecosystems should be a foundation of the rural community’s land use policies in recognition of the irreplaceable nature of these areas. Design standards to encourage preservation of open space as a means of keeping the rural character of the community should also be a center of Bonner County’s land use codes.

## **5.5 Recreation**

Bonner County has recognized the numerous public and private recreational opportunities that are a major County asset to be protected and encouraged. Many parks, the large tracts of public lands, and campgrounds adjoin private lands. Vistas, parkways, scenic drives and trails encompass portions of the travel-ways in the County. Golf resorts and water-related recreation activities, including marinas/boat access, beaches/public access, fishing, make Bonner County a summer destination for much of the Inland Northwest; while fall and winter time activities including hunting, downhill skiing and snowmobiling make Bonner County a fall and winter destination for the Spokane and Coeur d’Alene recreationists.

The County has chosen the Alpine and Resort Community land use map designations as a method to recognize existing developments centered around sports, outdoor attractions and recreational uses and to protect and encourage this important County asset. Existing areas of developed recreational communities such Schweitzer Mountain Resort, and the golf/residential complexes of Hidden Lakes, Stoneridge, and Priest Lake Golf Resort represent the desire of the community to develop areas for recreational opportunities.

Bonner County seeks to develop a waterways and park access program to preserve and develop access to public recreational lands and waterways. This program should include retaining access parcels that may be acquired from tax sales or private donations. The County has recognized that as the development of the area’s waterways continues, public access to public waterways is being eroded.

The County wishes to create “green belts” of opens space and bike and “multi-use” trail and recreation systems as a “economic bootstrap” for the area to add to the existing attractions and create future opportunities. Whenever possible, the County desires to interconnect these systems as new development occurs as to not adversely affect existing public recreational accesses and amenities.

## **5.6 Housing**

Suitability of land for housing development is tied to the ability to serve future residents adequately with sewer and water provisions, fire protection, schools, police and roads and avoidance of hazardous or sensitive areas. Central to the comprehensive plan discussion by the community and Commission during workshops to revise the comprehensive plan has been issues of water quality, adequate public services and the desire to focus higher density growth to those areas that can adequately serve the larger populations with a good transportation system and urban-level sewer and water services.

Rapid development of the suburban area of Bonner County in recent years has also brought into focus the need to provide adequate separation between septic drainfield systems and domestic wells, and to assure continued groundwater protection as the growth continues. Zoning standards established in 1980 set forth a 9,000 square foot minimum for suburban parcels served by individual wells and septic/drainfields. The minimums were revised to 1 acre for Suburban, Commercial, Rural Service, Industrial and Recreation parcels not served by “urban” water or sewer services in 1995.

During comprehensive plan workshops, the Planning & Zoning Commission reviewed with the Panhandle Health District and the Division of Environmental Quality the constraints that individual systems place on residential homesite development. The Commission had concluded that a 1-acre minimum is insufficient for adequate separation of individual wells and subsurface sewage disposal systems, and that the property rights of adjoining landowners can be affected by the proliferation of 1-acre parcels with individual wells/septics by limiting the neighbors’ well construction or homesite development.

Water quality is also an issue as growth occurs on unsewered lots. Nitrate is not removed from the soil as wastewater percolates downward (Groundwater Stewardship in Oregon). Risk of transport of nutrients and pathogens through the soil also present problems, particularly in areas of high water tables and highly permeable soils. The Natural Resources Component of the Bonner County Comprehensive Plan points to septic tanks as a source of water quality degradation of a number of County waterways. The soils chapter of this component also points out the lack of suitable soils in Bonner County for adequate subsurface sewage disposal. Of the 64 soil units inventoried in the *Soil Survey of the Bonner County Area, Idaho*, only three are rated favorable for the use of subsurface sewage disposal units, while the balance are classified as “severe,” due to soil properties or site features that are so unfavorable or so difficult to overcome that special design, significant increases in construction costs, and possibly increased maintenance are required.

Kootenai County and the Panhandle Health District studied the effects of septic/drainfields on the Rathdrum Aquifer, and found a direct relationship between the growing number of septic systems and high soil nitrate levels. The County stopped issuing septic permits on lots of less than 5 acres, but offered sewer management agreements to allow development of higher density subdivisions to occur while sewer treatment systems were being extended to serve it (American Planning Association). Minimum acreage requirements in various jurisdictions differ, based on aquifer depths and extent, soil types, growth objectives, etc.

The Planning & Zoning Commission proposed a minimum 2½-acre site area where neither urban-like water nor urban-like sewer services is available, and a 1-acre minimum where either urban water or urban



sewer services is available. Bonner County Revised Code, Section 12-202, defines urban services as:

**URBAN SERVICES.** Publicly or privately maintained water supply and distribution systems; sewage collection, treatment and disposal systems (not to include individual septic tanks and drainfield systems or community septic tanks and drainfield systems unless subject to an approved sewer management agreement); electric power and telephone utilities; and hard-surfaced roads constructed to the standards set forth in Title 2 of this Title. (Ord. 278, 3-29-1995)

Bonner County adopted an interim ordinance in February of 2005 establishing a 2½-acre minimum standard for parcels not served by both urban water and sewer services. Under the ordinance, a parcel served by a public or private, community water system, but served by individual septic tank/drainfield systems could be subdivided into lots of 1 acre each, provided they meet the remaining zoning and subdivision laws and are approved by Bonner County. Likewise, a parcel served by a public or private sewer collection, treatment and disposal system but individual wells would be entitled to 1-acre minimums. Service by neither “urban” water or sewer would mean 2½-acre minimums. Public or private water systems may include water districts, city water service or private well systems designed and operated to meet the public standards of the State of Idaho. Urban sewer systems include the sewer districts, city sewer systems or treatment systems such as the lagoon/spray irrigation system operated by Huckleberry Bay Co. east of Priest Lake. Large absorption drainfields or other community septic/drainfield systems are not considered urban services. The current ordinance offers an opportunity for a sewer management agreement, similar to the Kootenai County version, in which agreements between developers and sewer districts and Bonner County may be created to bring sewer treatment to a developing area.

In addition to the basic sewer and water services, the community has mapped and adopted within its comprehensive plan floodplain hazards, steep slopes, sensitive wildlife areas, wetlands, fire districts and transportation systems. Proposed densities relative to these service and sensitive areas are reflected in the proposed land use matrix and proposed land use map.

## **5.7 Commerce and Industry**

The 1978 economic development portion of the County’s comprehensive plan calls for commercial and industrial areas to be located in defined areas and along major roads. When the original comprehensive plan was adopted in the late 70s, the County’s economic focus was on timber production and related mill operations.

The Economic Development component of the Comprehensive Plan details the evolution of Bonner County’s industry and commerce. The component acknowledges the permanent losses of high-paying mill and logging jobs. Other industrial development has offset the lumber industry’s job losses with such new sources of employment as the retail and catalog business, food manufacturing, medical research, development and services, high-tech and specialized manufacturers of computer parts and tool and metal fabricators.

The 1978 plan established industrial uses in the rural areas of the County for such natural-resource related



industries as lumber mills. The plan also encouraged a diversity of industries and called for “certain standards” to be adopted to minimize adverse impacts on natural resources, existing services and the integrity of the residential areas. Similar themes were echoed during the 2003 community meetings conducted by Bonner County as part of the comprehensive plan update. Citizens recognized the need to diversify its economic base and looked to the County to encourage new industries to replace the loss of timber jobs. But the public also emphasized the need to protect the natural resources and preserve the rural character of the community while encouraging commercial and industrial growth. Strip and sprawl development should be avoided, and clustered or concentrated areas of commercial and industrial uses should be encouraged to preserve the natural areas, retain the free-flowing transportation system and retain the rural setting (Land Use component minute record).

Bonner County currently has about 380 acres of vacant commercial land and 2,755 acres of developed commercial lands in the unincorporated areas, according to the Bonner County records. These figures include commercially developed recreation sites, but exclude commercial timber or grazing lands. Vacant industrial land accounts for about 106 acres, while improved industrial acreage totals about 630 acres, excluding ag/industrial uses (Assessor’s Office communication).

## **5.8 Public Facilities**

An entire component of the Comprehensive Plan, “Public Services, Facilities and Utilities” is devoted to the water, sewer, transportation, electric and gas services of this community and the public facilities which serve it. Suitability of lands for public facilities are based on service boundaries, community needs, proximity to sources of water, gas or electrical transmission lines and other resource needs. Consideration must be given to avoiding hazardous areas and avoiding the potential to create hazards when siting public facilities.

Model flood damage prevention ordinances, which Bonner County has adopted, require sewer, water and gas utilities be designed to minimize the infiltration of flood waters into the systems and the discharge of sewage into flood waters. On-site waste disposal systems are to be located to avoid impairment during a flood and contamination from them in the event of flooding (Bonner County Revised Code, Chapter 16). The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) also cautions communities to establish emergency response and critical facilities away from floodplains so that communications, equipment, shelters and personnel are not at risk in flood events.

## CHAPTER 6 - PROPOSED LAND USE

The existing 1978 comprehensive plan map and matrix created five major map designations and provided for a density range of 12,000 square feet to 5 acres. An approximate 1-mile swath of the County's waterways were designed "Recreation," and provided for a range of activities from higher density residential development, commercial and industrial uses, recreational vehicle parks and mobile home parks. Generally most of these area designed for the most intense, highest density uses did not have urban-like water or sewer services and in many cases lacked good transportation networks. Examples are the remote Lakeview townsite, on the eastern side of Lake Pend Oreille, which is nearly inaccessible in winter over the 26-mile Forest Service road system, and the upper stretches of the Priest Lake and Upper Priest Lake, which are served by limited state or federal roads.

The majority of the County was designated "rural," with 5-acre minimums in the 1978 plan. Almost all of the federal and state lands and surrounding large holdings of private timber lands were designated Rural, even though many of these areas are remote and service-less.

After developing an extensive set of resource maps detailing the sewer and water service areas, transportation networks, surface water, slopes, hazard areas, wetlands and wildlife habitat, Bonner County determined that the 1978 land use map needed to be completely revised, and a new map adopted. The focus of the revisions was placing higher density development in areas that can be served by good road systems and public services that are centered in the city areas of impact. Bonner County recognized that it needs to encourage development in areas where services are located and to protect its productive timber and agricultural lands. Slopes also factored into the future land use analysis. Areas of steeper slopes (30% and greater) are recognized as poor areas for residential development because of the need for excessive road building, exposure to wildland fire, erosion potentials and challenges to adequately serving these areas with fire and emergency services. More than 40% of the woodland acreage is on steep, erodible soils. More than half of the 64 soils units classified in Bonner County are listed as poorly suited for homesite development due to slope. (Soil Survey).

Bonner County proposed to establish the following density ranges:

0-2.5 acres for areas served by urban-like water and sewer services and good transportation networks and fire protection districts. These areas are generally located within the areas of city impact, where urban services are available or can be extended, or where taxing districts have been formed to provide sewer and water services as historic neighborhoods have arisen and expanded. Generally, these areas have little to moderate slopes. Within certain areas of city impact, sewer and water services are not available and steeper slopes prevail. These areas have been designated for lower densities. Included in this 0-2.5-acre density range are the County's recreation communities with full services, such as Schweitzer Mountain ski resort and the Hidden Lakes and Stoneridge golf and residential complexes.

1-5 acres for areas on or near the fringes of city impact, which may be within fire districts and sewer or water districts, adjoining higher density, developed areas with public right-of-way access. Slopes are generally level to moderate (0-10%). Expectations are for these areas to be served or annexed by nearby cities.

5 to 10 acres for areas outside the sewer districts, but in areas where subsurface sewage disposal can be achieved without adverse impact to surface or ground water. These are areas outside the prime agricultural lands. Slopes are level to moderate. Access may be private or public roads. Sites are away from the city centers, but generally accessible by nearby transportation networks. Excludes areas of steeper slopes. These areas include critical wildlife habitat areas identified by resource mapping.

10 to 20 acres Included in this would be agricultural lands, forest land, sites on steeper slopes, where generally there is limited transportation networks. Certain critical wildlife habitat and wetlands may be present. Steeper slopes (30% and greater) are predominate.

20 acres and larger Roadless, remote, service-less private lands and areas reserved for the prime timber and agricultural lands and certain municipal watersheds. Slopes may vary from level to steep and transportation systems also vary, since the primary focus of this designation is to preserve prime forest and agricultural lands.

40 acres and larger State and federal holdings within roadless, remote, service-less areas on steeper slopes devoted to timber production and management or public recreational uses. Included in these areas are some municipal watersheds.

Bonner County’s 1978 comprehensive plan “Proposed Land Use” component called for five general land use classifications. The revised “Project Land Use Map” calls for 10 land use designations noted in the matrix below.

The 1978 designations and their descriptions were:

**Recreation:** The Recreation classification is intended to allow for urban residential densities in remote and scenic areas of the County centered around winter sports, lakes and rivers. If seasonal recreation areas can be developed without requiring year-round public services, the cost to taxpayers of servicing these remote areas can be minimized.

**Rural:** The Rural classification makes up the majority of the County. These areas are away from existing population and service centers with a residential density of one unit per five acres. Natural resource oriented industry and manufacturing are permitted as a conditional use.

**Suburban:** The Suburban classification designates the neighborhood or residential areas of the County. Land use includes neighborhood businesses, home occupations, and residential density of one unit per acre. Multi-family housing and mobile home parks are permitted as a conditional use.

**Transition:** The Transition classification provides for land uses similar to the urban areas with the exception of slightly less residential density per acre and heavy industry being permitted as a conditional use. The transition classification allows for cities and existing growth centers to expand without totally committing the land as an industrial area.

**Urban:** The Urban classification is designed so the most intense type of land use occurs around the largest cities and towns, where existing services can best handle the growing demand. Land use in the urban area includes industry and commerce, multi-family housing and mobile home parks, and small-lot single family residential.

## **6.1 Proposed Land Use (Matrix/Categories)**

The proposed land use matrix below lists general uses and characteristics of each of the map designations. Since the map covers 1.1 million acres, the map is generally in nature, and it is recognized that some areas may have more moderate slopes or include transportation features that cannot be mapped on this scale.

### **Map Designations**

1. Transition: The Transition classification is reserved for those areas of the County where a mixture of land uses can occur which may include higher density residential uses, commercial, industrial and light industrial uses. Due to the intensity of land use, these areas require primary transportation routes, urban-like water and sewer services, fire and police services.

2. Neighborhood Commercial The Neighborhood Commercial area is designed to provide light commercial uses to serve the needs of the rural communities and tourist trade without adversely affecting residential neighborhoods. Urban services and primary transportation systems, such as the state highways or major/minor collector roads are required.

3. Urban Growth Areas The Urban Growth Areas are designed to recognize the historic developments of communities and neighborhoods which are served by either urban water or sewer services or are located within the fringes of incorporated cities where such services have or can be extended to serve these areas. These areas are general level to moderately slopes and serve by a network of primary transportation systems.

4. Resort Community The Resort Community provides for urban-like densities for areas centered around the recreational areas developed for winter and water sports, golf and hiking, where urban services are provided.

5. Alpine Community The Alpine Community is established to recognize the challenges of higher density development in higher elevations of Bonner County generally above 3,500 feet elevation, where urban services are provided, but a range of road types developed in mountainous conditions serve the area. Specific design standards to address steeper slopes and heavy snowfall will govern these areas.

6. Suburban Growth Area The Suburban Growth Area is located on the edges of the incorporated cities or higher density developed communities or areas, where urban sewer and water services may not be available or are not likely to be extended. Access to primary transportation routes and a system of hard-surfaced roads are expected.

7. Rural Residential The Rural Residential area provides for residential development in areas where urban services are not available and slopes may vary up to 30%. These areas include hazard areas and critical wildlife habitats, where lower densities reduce potential impacts to resources and exposures to loss of property or lives. Small-scale agricultural uses and residential development are permitted.

8. Ag/Forest Land The Ag/Forest Land designation recognizes areas where steeper slopes prevail (30%

or greater) and transportation is provided by private roads or U.S. Forest Service or state roads. Urban services are not available and residential development challenges are present due to slope, poor soil conditions, hazard areas and lack of police or fire services.

9. Prime Ag/Forest Land The prime agricultural/forest land is designed to preserve the productive farm and ranch land and timber land to promote its important economic and environmental contributions to the County. This area may have a range of road systems serving it and is generally served by individual sewer and water systems. These areas generally have prime agricultural land soils and soils of recognized state importance and active farm and ranch operations.

10. Remote Ag/Forest Land The remote Ag/forest land is located on mountaintops and remote areas of the County where few or no access roads have been constructed. Included in these areas are most of the state and federal lands, which are managed for forest production or recreation.

## BONNER COUNTY PROPOSED LAND USE MATRIX - Criteria

DESIGNATION	DENSITY	SERVICES	TRANSPORTATION	SLOPE	USE
<b>Transition</b>	0-2.5 acres	Urban	1	0-10%	Commercial/Industrial/Mix
<b>Neighborhood Commercial</b>	0-2.5 acres	Urban	1	0-10%	Rural/Commercial/Mix
<b>Urban Growth Area</b>	0-2.5 acres	Urban/Partial	1	0-10%	Higher density residential
<b>Resort Community</b>	0-2.5	Urban	1	0-10%	Waterfront residential/recreation
<b>Alpine Community</b>	0-2.5 acres	Urban	1-3	N/A	Recreation/Residential/Mix
<b>Suburban Growth Area</b>	1-5 acres	Individual	2	0-15%	Residential & associated uses
<b>Rural Residential</b>	5-10 acres	Individual	3	0-30%	Rural/small-acreage farms/residential
<b>Ag/Forest Land</b>	10-20 acres	Individual	3-4	≥30%	Ag/residential/forest land
<b>Prime Forest/Ag Land</b>	≥20 acres	Individual	2-4	0-30%	Prime Ag/forest land
<b>Remote Forest/Ag Land</b>	≥40 acres	Individual	5	≥30%	Remote forest/Ag land

General transportation criteria:

- 1: Hard-surfaced road. (Major/minor collector - frontage road, U.S. highway, principal arterial.) (Higher density residential needs hard-surfaced road, but not necessarily highway/frontage. etc.) Public right-of-way.
- 2: Public right-of-way; paved
- 3: Public right-of-way, paved or gravel/private easement, International Fire Code standard
- 4: USFS, DOL or private road systems adjoining county or state public transportation systems.
- 5: Roadless, primitive, trail system or unimproved.

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Bonner County Assessor's Office, e-mail communication, personal communication, November, 2005.

Bonner County Zoning Code, Ordinance #140, 1/11/80.

Bonner County Comprehensive Plan, 1978.

<http://www.idoc.state.id.us/idcomm/profiles/pdfs/Bonner.pdf>

(National Gap Analysis Program, and land cover mapping efforts, please refer to the following websites:

National Gap Analysis Program - <http://www.gap.uidaho.edu/>

Idaho Gap Analysis Project - <http://www.gap.uidaho.edu/idgap/>

Idaho Department of Lands, State & Private Forestry Fact Sheet, March 2004.

Idaho Forest Legacy Program, [www2.state.id.us/lands/forest\\_legacy/legacy-1.htm](http://www2.state.id.us/lands/forest_legacy/legacy-1.htm)

Groundwater Stewardship in Oregon

Soil Survey of the Bonner County Area, Idaho. November, 1982.