

August 15, 2022

Bonner County Planning Commissioners,

Here are recommended Policy additions for the Natural Resource component of the Bonner County Comprehensive Plan:

- Bonner County will act to protect, maintain and enhance its rich and unique biodiversity. The measures provided will include:
 - Detailed GIS mapping, including the results of eDNA testing, of Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species distribution and critical habitat (Idaho Department of Fish and Game S1-S3 ranked species), and site visits by qualified wildlife ecologists and biologists.
 - Habitat Conservation Plan development for all S1-S3 ranked species that identifies the network of critical habitat, recovery areas, connectivity areas and migration corridors that provide for genetic and climate change-based migration, that allow long term, persistent, viable populations to prevent local extirpation.
 - Delineation of wetland boundaries and buffers by wetlands specialists, including vegetation type and soil type.
 - Species that have been extirpated or are in danger of extirpation in the County will be identified, the conditions/land use actions that caused it analyzed, and plans drafted for their possible reintroduction (i.e., White-Headed Woodpecker, monarch butterfly (likely extirpated, present during migration). Northern Leopard Frogs (IDFG draft state wildlife plan which includes Bonner County). There is one western grebe colony with no reproduction (Denton Slough) which is on the verge of extirpation.
- Clustered development will be required to preserve open space for wildlife habitat.
- Input from Idaho Department of Fish and Game, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Resources Conservation Service (and any professional conservation organizations) will be solicited to develop programs, and identify grants, to aid in conserving Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species. These will include bear proof canisters and electrical fencing for those choosing to live in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), to reduce potential for conflict, and to protect human lives and livestock. Fines will be considered for those who do not do so.
- Wildland Urban Interface delineations will be reexamined, and their extent reduced to protect existing structures (i.e., 100 – 200 meters), where thinning might help and underburning would be a regular and funded occurrence.
- Mature and old growth forests will be mapped on all lands in the County including Federal, State and Private lands, in response to the Presidential EO (Exec. Order No. 14072) for identifying mature and old growth forests on Federal and other lands. Adding State of Idaho and private lands to this EO would increase the extent of Mature and Old Growth forest. These forest successional stages will be protected on all ownerships.
- Wilderness designation for all proposed wilderness and Rare II roadless areas in the County will be actively pursued. Wilderness designation is crucial for maintaining biodiversity, carbon storage and a healthful environment for all (Map 1 below).

- Riparian buffers will be protected from development, including those adjacent to lakes, streams and wetlands of any type, of at least 100+ feet will be delineated.
- Grants will be made available to landowners to encourage them to convert their lawns into native plant gardens and wildflower meadows.
- Negotiations will be undertaken to convert Priest Lake State Forest (IDL) to a State Park, and/or given to the Federal Government because of its high value for wildlife and recreation.
- All land use planning discussions will be done by the Planning Committee, in a public forum, and recorded on the Bonner County YouTube channel. Behind-the-scenes maneuvers (i.e., planning to create a Clark Fork State Park) by any committee (i.e., the Bonner County Natural Resources Committee) will be immediately suspended, and any discussions/documents related to it should be immediately publicly released.
- Proposed and existing trails, including those in the Bonner County Trail Plan, will be reexamined in light of the new Critical Habitat Map, once it has been produced, and none will be approved in riparian zones (i.e., Sand Creek Basin). Given that increased population has resulted in pressure to create more trails, and given that mountain bikes and motorized vehicles negatively impact wildlife, trails will only be maintained and/or created in areas that do not include Threatened, Endangered or Sensitive species. The right to recreate, and providing so-called “nature” experiences, does not preclude the need to protect species that have co-evolved in specific areas.

Submitted by,

George Gehrig
Ponderay, ID 83852
318.564.9840

Paul Sieracki
Geospatial Analyst/Wildlife Biologist, ret.
Priest River, ID 83856
209.217.0609

Map 1. Roadless Areas of Bonner County and Vicinity.

