

**DRAFT**  
**As of 1/7/2020**  
**Priest Lake Area Plan**

**Vision Statement**

Our vision is to preserve the unique environment of Priest Lake Area (PLA) by protecting our abundant natural resources, community's character, air & water quality, while promoting a strong year round economy and a thriving local community.

# Population

## Introduction

Based on historical studies, the recreational attractiveness of the Priest Lake Area (PLA), as shown in Figure 1, leads to seasonal population variations around major waterbodies and other developed recreation areas. In addition to the very small year-round residential population (which can be estimated from historic census data), the demographics, and annual seasonal trends of visitors (along with part time residents) has a significant impact to important planning components. This dynamic population analysis is important to both private sector business planning with the related business vitality, and also strongly impacts public facility and service needs and goals. This population component includes an analysis of past, present, and future trends in population, and details such as total population, household size, and demographics. Analysis related to seasonal population variations is covered in the Recreation component of the PLA plan [insert page #].

## Existing Conditions

The PLA incorporates multiple census tracts, zip codes, and statistical areas. The analysis herein often draws from data points that contain but are not limited to the PLA. While the data presented below capture our best efforts to understand population in the PLA, general population growth trends, numbers, and graphs very likely fail to capture the complexity and variation of the PLA population.

## Population

While data from the upcoming 2020 census will provide more precise numbers, the existing populations of the Coolin (83821), Nordman (83848), and the northernmost portion of the Priest River (83856) zip codes (i.e., that general geographic area which is included in the PLA) have been estimated from data summarized on the U.S. Census Website, using 2000 and 2010 Census Data. This site provides estimates for subsequent years after the census, however, no detail as to their rationalizations for specific changes in our smallest communities was identified. For comparison, data from Bonner County as a whole, the State of Idaho, and the U.S. were also evaluated. These data are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Population Trends in the PLA vs Bonner County, the State of Idaho, and the U.S.[CM1]**

Source	US Census	US Census										US Census
Year	2000	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Total Population</b>												
United States	281,421,906	308,745,538	311,580,009	313,874,218	316,057,727	318,386,421	320,742,673	323,071,342	325,147,121	327,167,434	?	?
State of Idaho	1,293,953	1,567,582	1,583,828	1,595,441	1,611,530	1,631,530	1,651,523	1,682,930	1,718,904	1,754,208	?	?
Bonner County, Idaho	36,835	40,877	40,849	40,806	40,743	40,899	41,066	41,389	41,855	44,727	?	?
Priest River, Idaho - 83856*	6,283	6,340	6,236	5,986	5,846	6,259	6,284	6,214	6,350	7,101	7,192	7,274
~ Priest River Population in PL Area												
Coolin, Idaho - 83821	230	210	305	403	346	354	293	245	168	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nordman, Idaho - 83848	197	137	94	124	202	217	212	266	249	253	257	260
<b>Total Population, PL Area</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>511</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>260</b>
* "X" Percent of Zip in PL Area												

## Housing

Data from these same web queries also indicate that the average household size in our area (as of 2010) was 2.16, and the average age was 52.5. Median household income data were incomplete, but ranged from a low of \$26,667 in Nordman to a high of \$41,582 in Priest River. A more current study by EMSI, however, estimates average income in Nordman increased to \$52,900 in 2018. This higher income number may be the result of retirees who have moved to the area full-time, perhaps after being counted only as part-time residents and/or property owners in past surveys.

Similarly, if the median age was 52.5 in 2010, it may well be over 60 in the 2020 census. Such a conclusion could be supported by anecdotal observations by PLA committee members that many of the resident volunteers who have helped in organizations within the PLA are rapidly aging, and no longer able to contribute the same energy and time commitments as in the past. This lack of manpower is starting to affect important emergency services like fire and ambulance services, because these have historically been run solely by volunteers.

Total housing units in the 2010 census were **1,467**, an increase of 15 percent since the 2000 census. If that trend holds, our 2020 census household numbers would be approximately **1,687**. Understanding household numbers is perhaps more important than year round residents in the PLA due to the high volume of transient/part-time home owners. For example, if the 2.16 members/household is applied to the **1,687** household 2020 population estimate (a 15% increase over 2010), our year-round and part-time residential base could now be in the range of **3,600**.

As noted above, our year-round and part-time residents comprise only a small percentage of the seasonal population base. Recreation factors relating to population are covered in detail in the Recreation component of the Priest Lake Area plan.

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[CM1] This number does not include any of the PR zip code area, and will need to be adjusted once the PLA boundary is firmed up.

## **Future Conditions**

The community plan for the Priest Lake Area shall be designed to protect the quality of the environment and the quality of life for its citizens, including opportunities for education, available housing, and reliable work opportunities in the area. As growth continues, community services including law enforcement, fire protection, adequate sewage disposal, emergency services, and road infrastructure shall be available.

## **Policies:**

- The area plan shall keep current with Federal, State, and County population data and use available resources to analyze community needs and land use planning.
- Population and demographic forecast data shall be used to evaluate housing, education, road infrastructure, and service needs.
- Apply the results of this analysis to the PLA plan to maintain alignment and support its vision statement.

## **To be continued:**

### **Recreation**

A 1995 study published in 1996 by the USFS, *Human Dimensions of Priest Lake*, found almost a quarter of a million visitors utilized this region in the summer months. Of these surveyed visits, approximately 26% indicated they were year-round or second home/lessee property owners in the area.

Of those visiting in 1995, 64% indicated they spent 1 or more nights in the PLA, with most staying an average of 4 nights. Seventeen (17) percent of the visitors stayed at their second homes or at a leased cabin. Thirteen (13) percent used the homes of friends or relatives, a hotel/motel/resort or B&B. “Vacation”, “recreation”, and “leisure” were the most often mentioned primary reasons for coming to the PLA for all recreationalists. Visitors indicated that viewing natural scenery added the most to their experiences in the PLA, and scenery was the highest rated feature of all users, followed by motorized boating. Thirty-six percent of all users stated that the beauty and wilderness were what made their most important place in the PLA special to them. Eighty-two percent of all users indicated “they would miss the area considerably” if they could no longer use it.

Across the larger Idaho Panhandle National Forest (as of 2014), over 1M visitor use days were recorded. Therefore, it is unlikely that use in the PLA has decreased since the 1996 study was published.