

*Growth Policy Update*

# **VALLEY COUNTY**



**Planning Board Draft**

June 2021

# VALLEY COUNTY

## Growth Policy Update

Planning Board Draft - June 2021

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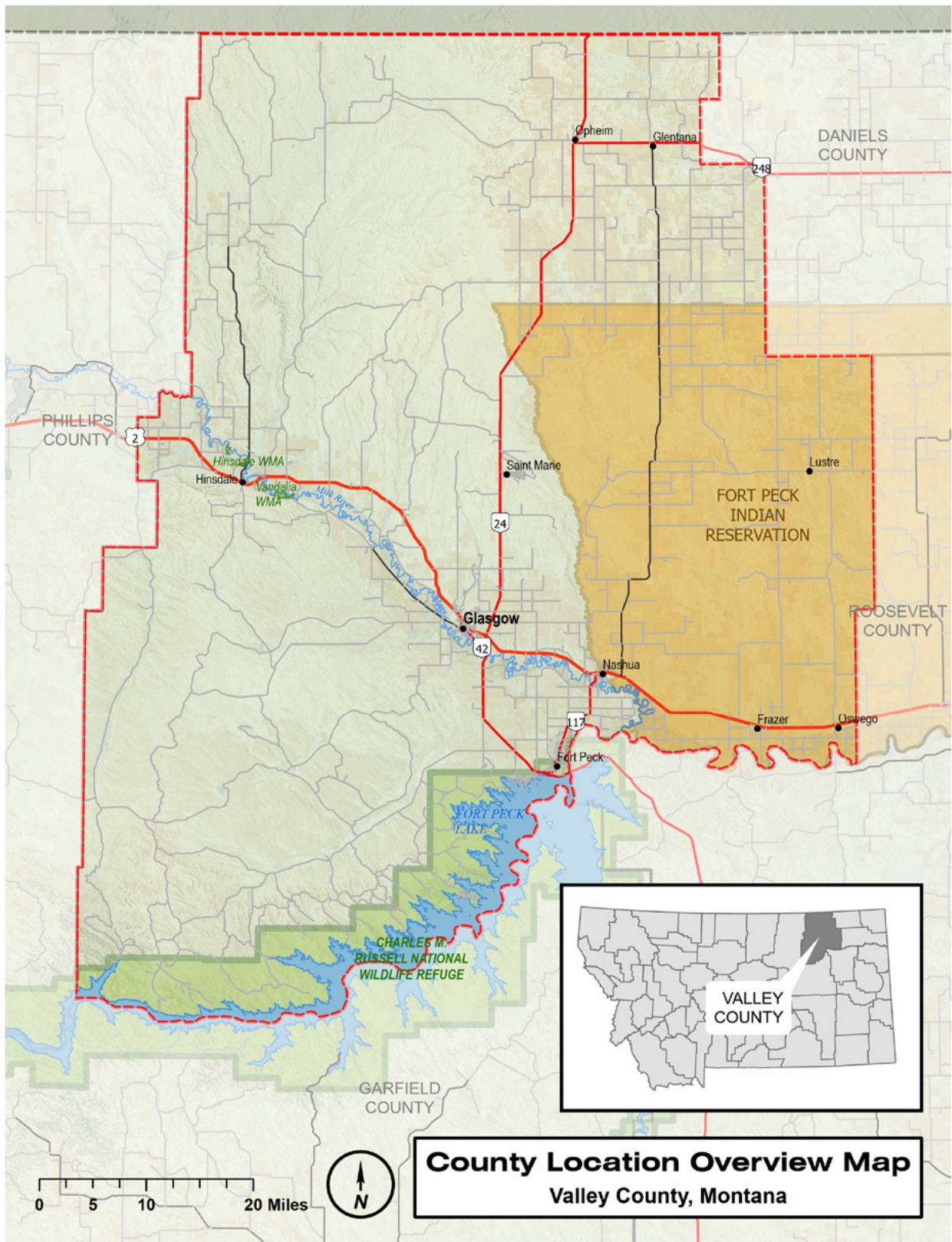
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

▼ Map 1 - Location of Valley County



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This document is an update of the 2006 Valley County Growth Policy and is focused on the jurisdictional area of Valley County. Municipalities such as Glasgow, Fort Peck, Nashua and Opheim and other unincorporated communities are also very important to the day-to-day life of residents in the County; thus, the update also contains information and guidance about issues of concern to their residents.

Some of the opportunities and issues of concern to County residents include:

- Pursue private and public grants to help improve the physical and emotional wellness of Valley County residents.
- Working with State and Federal agencies and the state’s Congressional delegation to clean up the unoccupied areas of St. Marie to maintain a sustainable community free of hazards and unoccupied, and derelict buildings.
- Continue to pursue Federal grant funding such as Federal Land Access Program (FLAP) grants to improve road access to the Fort Peck Cabin, Duck Creek and Pines Recreation areas.
- Support all the County’s communities to obtain grants for sewer and water projects or other infrastructure.
- Continue to support “4 for 2” in the upgrading of US Highway 2 from a two-lane to a four-lane highway.
- Continue to support the development of the Keystone XL pipeline.
- Continue to support the County’s economic development organizations such as Two Rivers Growth and Great Northern Development.
- Maintain coordination and cooperation agency status with Federal land management agencies.
- Prioritize a safe and efficient County road system.
- Support an environment where our children are safe from substance abuse and violence and have access to necessities and a safe, stimulating education system.
- Oppose a political and social environment that is hostile to rural communities.
- Support a thriving, independent and productive agricultural community.
- Oppose new federal land designations, restrictions, and mandates.
- Protect and preserve private property rights.
- Recognize and value the benefits of our rural lifestyle with a smaller population, remoteness and open space, and long-term family connections to place and community.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document contains nine (9) sections that provide the purpose and need for achieving the goals mentioned above and the foundation for other goals identified in the document. These sections include:

**Goals and Objectives:** Take advantage of opportunities or address issues that cannot happen by chance. County residents must be willing to set practical and achievable goals to make things happen.

**Introduction:** A description of the County, its location, physical features, and history.

**Population:** A description of the County's population and demographics.

**Economy:** A description of the County's current economic situation and how residents might address economic issues and capitalize on potential opportunities.

**Local Services and Public Facilities:** A description of the services the County provides and the infrastructure it maintains.

**Housing:** A description of the housing stock in the County.

**Land Use:** A description of topics ranging from subdivision review, sand and gravel resources and the wildland urban interface.

**Resident Outreach:** The process used to gather the advice and guidance of County residents to understand what they think are the most important issues to be focused on.

**Action Plan:** A description of the actual steps that the County may take to reach its goals and a discussion about subdivision review, coordination with the municipalities in the County and how future updates of the Growth Policy might be addressed.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following are the goals and objectives meant to address the opportunities and needs identified during the update of this plan. The specific actions that the County will take to achieve these goals are detailed in the Action Plan section of this document starting on page 39.

## ECONOMY

The County will work to create an economic foundation to help its residents prosper. This includes strengthening and diversifying its economic base.

Goals	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Manage for conservative property taxes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support new investments in start-up businesses by considering the use of tax incentives.</li> <li>▪ Support major projects such as the Keystone Pipeline which will increase economic activity and reduce property taxes for residents.</li> <li>▪ Manage County budgets conservatively.</li> <li>▪ Research business property taxes and understand their impacts on the County.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthen the County’s tax base.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encourage expansion and diversification of the County’s economy.</li> <li>▪ Encourage residential, commercial, and industrial land development.</li> <li>▪ Discourage the creation of new conservation easements.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support the County’s existing industries and businesses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Undertake regular communication with major employers and develop strategies to help them maintain and expand their operations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support the development of a highly skilled, flexible work force.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordinate with County’s educational institutions to provide training/skill requirements needed by local employers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote recreational use of the County.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide adequate and safe road access to Fort Peck Lake for recreationists, emergency services and residents.</li> <li>▪ Support the development of tourism initiatives, including upgrades to roads, camping, and support services.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support and encourage agricultural operations within the County.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commissioners will maintain regular contact with producers to effectively represent Valley County agriculture in advocating for legislation and developing policy.</li> <li>▪ Oppose state or federal initiatives that help create an environment hostile to agricultural operations, agricultural products, and rural citizens.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Decrease the negative economic impact caused by substance abuse, poor physical health, and mental illness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase education efforts to inform citizens about physical and mental health problems, prevention, and treatment.</li> <li>▪ Support efforts to increase the number healthcare providers.</li> <li>▪ Support efforts to have regional chemical dependency treatment and transition recovery facilities.</li> </ul>

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support private property rights.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for legislation and policies that will protect and strengthen our Constitutional private property rights.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve our understanding of the components of the County's economy.</li> </ul>	<p>Coordinate with state's universities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify what sectors of the economy (agriculture, railroad, federal, residential, etc.) are the primary source of County tax revenues.</li> <li>Determine how each sector of the County's economy impacts one another financially.</li> <li>Determine the expenditures of each sector of the economy within the County.</li> <li>Study the impact of tourism upon the provision of County services and how do the different types of tourism impact the economy of the County.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the County competitiveness for obtaining grants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create grant education clearing house for the County and its partners.</li> <li>Create a County Grant Writer position.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage new business development in the County.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact County alumni and find out what kind of incentives would encourage them to return to the County with their enterprise.</li> <li>Understand the potential for public/private partnerships in which the County could use grant money to aid in the start-up of new business ventures.</li> <li>Encourage the Montana Aviation Research Company to consider allowing use of their airfield for space travel purposes if beneficial to the company and the County.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify ways in which tourism can be more beneficial to County residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research the applicability of using a resort tax in the County.</li> <li>Identify fees or taxing options that could be used to have tourists help support the maintenance of the infrastructure and services they use.</li> <li>Determine how license fees collected by the state are spent and research options for having some of those fees returned to the County to help fund infrastructure and services.</li> </ul>

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Good infrastructure will help protect the health and safety of County residents and promote their economic success. Infrastructure ranges from roads and bridges to buildings and equipment such as trucks, graders, and patrol cars. Therefore, the County will provide essential infrastructure in an efficient, safe, and economical manner.



# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prioritize and maintain County property including buildings, major equipment, roads, and bridges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maximize use of Federal and State grants to assist in maintaining and upgrading County infrastructure.</li> <li>▪ Establish and fund capital improvement accounts for each County Department.</li> <li>▪ Support the “4 for 2” conversion of US Highway 2 to a four-lane highway.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve the safety of the County’s road system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify, prioritize, and fund road and bridges projects that improve safety through the Capital Improvements Plan.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adequately maintain the County’s road and bridge system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use and annually update the County’s Capital Improvements Plan to prioritize and fund important road and bridge projects.</li> </ul>

## LAND USE

New development should occur in areas with a limited potential for harm or damage from hazards such as flooding or wildfire and done in a manner that will protect private property rights and where the County can economically provide services. In addition, state and federal lands in the County should be managed in a way that will more directly benefit County residents and the economy.

Goals	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work with neighboring counties to encourage investments in recreational access to Fort Peck Lake while preserving the long-term viability of ranching on state and federal lands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pursue Federal Land Access Program (FLAP) funding for transportation improvements to the Duck Creek and Fort Peck Cabin and Marina areas and to other key access points for Fort Peck Lake.</li> <li>▪ Continue participation in the Montana Natural Resource Coalition to oppose creation of the American Prairie Reserve.</li> <li>▪ Support Bureau of Land Management (BLM) management plans that protect existing multiple use of state and federal lands.</li> <li>▪ Oppose the introduction of wild, free-roaming bison.</li> <li>▪ Oppose new federal land designations, restrictions and appropriations.</li> <li>▪ Research possibility of a possessory interest tax on allotted grazing rights.</li> <li>▪ Work with Corps of Engineers to develop walking trails around the lake.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Foster land use development which ensures suitable amounts of land are designated for future residential, commercial, and industrial uses and for public facilities without conflicting with neighboring uses and protecting private property rights.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use planning and regulation to support a compatible mix of residential, commercial, and industrial development to accommodate growth and minimize conflicts with adjacent uses such as agricultural operations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that the County’s land use regulations are up to date and meet statutory requirements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Update the County Floodplain Regulations.</li> <li>▪ Update the County Subdivision and adopt Buildings-for-Lease-or-Rent regulations per statutory requirements.</li> </ul>

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain coordination and cooperation agency status with federal land management agencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide the County Commission the with means to advocate for multiple use of BLM-administered land and to influence Fish Wildlife Service, Corps Of Engineers or Bureau of Reclamation land.</li> <li>Update the Valley County Resource Use Plan to provide the County Commission with the means to advocate for multiple use of and water management.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect the health of Valley County residents and support the viability of agricultural operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the implementation and enforcement of Ordinance 2014-1, as amended. An ordinance to declare all bison/buffalo within the Valley County Conservation District to be livestock</li> </ul>

## COMMUNITY SERVICES

Adequate community services are important to quality of life. This can include road maintenance, law enforcement, healthcare, education, emergency services, and recreation. Therefore, the County will work to ensure that residents have access to adequate community services.

Goals	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide services that support sustainable and attractive communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue adequate levels of funding for current County provided services.</li> <li>Support County communities to obtain grant funding for sewer and water projects or other infrastructure needs.</li> <li>Encourage Nemont to improve broadband in the County, including the pursuit of grant opportunities to fund this infrastructure.</li> <li>Research options for enabling recycling for County residents.</li> <li>Work with State and Federal agencies and Congressional delegation to clean up the unoccupied areas of St. Marie to maintain a sustainable community free of hazards of unoccupied and derelict buildings. See the narrative about St. Marie in the Land Use chapter of this plan.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the quality of life in Valley County.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support local clubs, organizations, and agencies by recognizing their importance to the County.</li> <li>Encourage the opportunities for attracting a general shopping center to open within the County.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to support programs that recognize the contributions of volunteers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide better recognition, recruitment, and training for volunteers.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create an Eastern Montana Chemical Dependency Center (CDC).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with other communities in eastern Montana to build a CDC to increase capacity and effectiveness.</li> </ul>

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve mental and physical health in the County.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase number of local healthcare providers.</li> <li>Encourage availability to better access to telehealth healthcare.</li> <li>Support more evidence-based trainings such as QPR, MHFA, and CIT.</li> <li>Encourage collaboration between local resources able to improve health.</li> <li>Find grant funds to create a pilot Community Healthcare Worker position.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that Amtrak and Cape Air Services continue to operate in the County.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure methods of travel as the potential for funding cutbacks by both Amtrak and Cape Air could affect the ability to recruit and maintain medical professionals and to allow County residents to attend out of town or out of state medical appointments.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure a safe and healthy environment for our children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support entities providing children’s services.</li> <li>Ensure that our children have access to basic necessities.</li> <li>Provide services to combat substance abuse and violence.</li> <li>Support area schools in providing a safe and stimulating educational environment.</li> <li>Support the survival of small schools and work to keep them open.</li> <li>Involve young people and get their input on County affairs.</li> </ul>

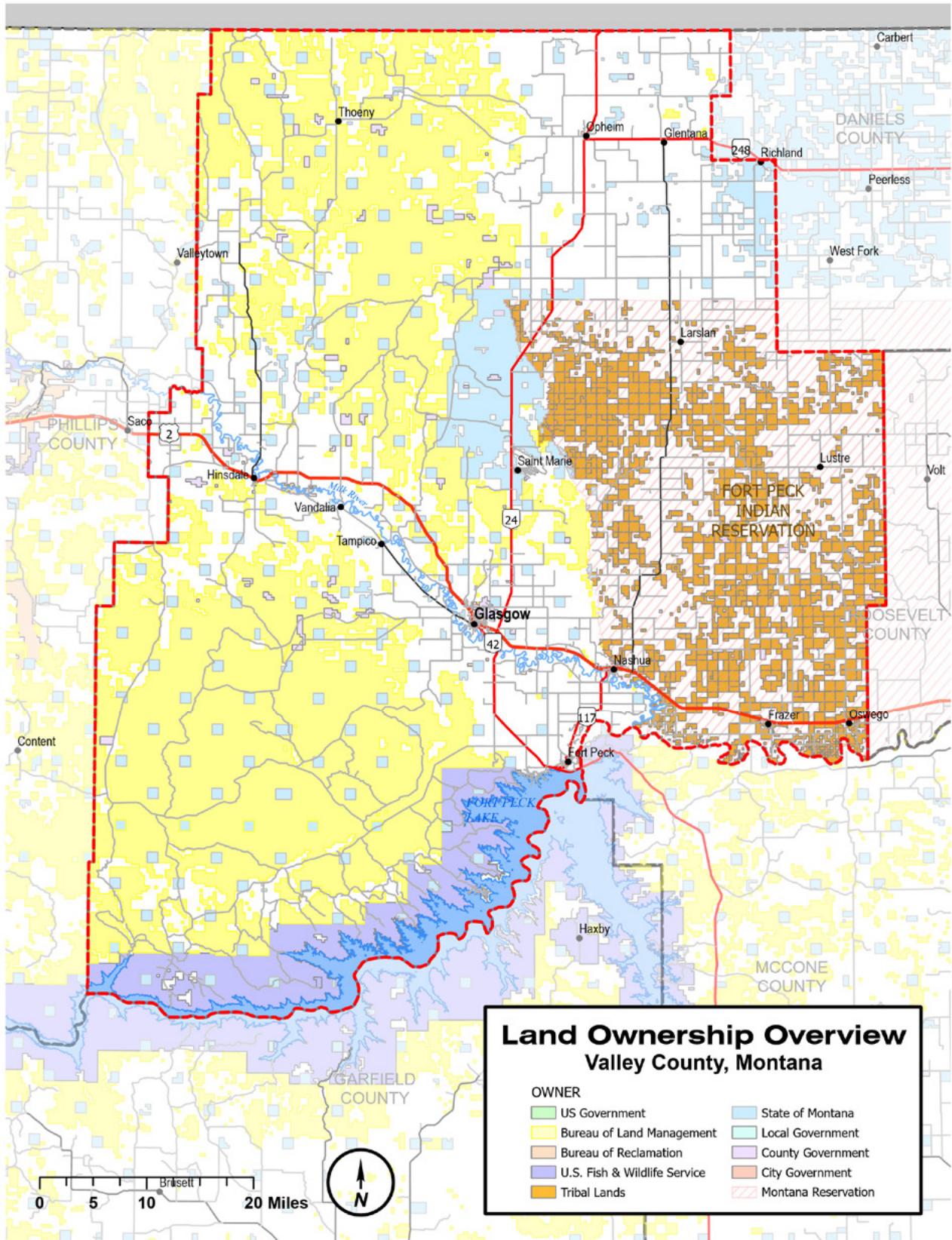
## HOUSING

Providing a variety of safe housing options is essential for all residents. Therefore, the County will work to create a situation where residents, particularly seniors and special needs persons, have access to adequate housing.

Goals	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain current affordable housing levels in the County.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve affordable housing at St. Marie by supporting the cleanup of hazards and derelict buildings.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide safe and adequate housing resources for the County’s senior residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage the development of affordable apartments and condominiums for aging residents.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage a range of housing options for all County residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote the preservation, rehabilitation, and additional investment in the County’s existing housing stock.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase senior housing options.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide incentives for the private sector to create a community for affordable senior housing with smaller homes or homes that meet ADA accessibility requirements.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help establish a safe, managed Transition Home for persons recovering from mental illness or substance abuse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help search for grants to help set up and start operating.</li> <li>Contact communities who have had success in having homes that are not funded by local taxes.</li> </ul>

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

▼ Map 2 - Land Ownership in Valley County



# INTRODUCTION

## LOCATION AND GEOGRAPHY

Valley County is in northeastern Montana. In 2018, the County had an estimated population of 7,532 people. The City of Glasgow is the largest municipality (3,328 people) in the County and serves as the County seat.

The County is bordered on the north by the Canadian province of Saskatchewan, on the east by Daniels and Roosevelt Counties, on the south by Fort Peck Lake, the Missouri River, and Garfield and McCone Counties, and on the west by Phillips County. The County is comprised of 5,061 square miles. The dominant landscape features noted by a traveler on US Highway 2 are the Missouri and Milk River Valleys. Irrigation of these valleys and the tree-lined rivers provide a lush appearance, which contrasts with the vast grasslands and farmlands north to the Canadian border and south to the Missouri River.

## CLIMATE

The County's climate is semi-arid with normal annual precipitation averaging 11.66 inches. Most of the precipitation falls during the late spring and early summer growing season. The frost-free growing season in the County lasts from mid-May to late September, ranging between 115 to 140 days. Temperatures in the County can vary dramatically throughout the year ranging from -30°F or colder in the winter to over 100°F in the summer.

## LAND OWNERSHIP

Valley County contains 3,239,454-acres of land. Of that, 1,435,158-acres are privately and local government owned, and 1,444,296-acres are state and federally owned. Ownership of federal and state lands includes the Bureau of Land Management, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Charles M Russell), Bureau of Reclamation, Corps of Engineers, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and the State of Montana. In addition, a significant portion of the County is under the ownership of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation.

The large amount of state and federal land significantly impacts the County, particularly from an economic standpoint. State and federal lands do not directly contribute to the property tax revenues of the County, unlike privately owned lands. Also, state, and federal lands are managed under rules and regulations developed in either Helena, Montana or Washington, D.C. and the management agencies do not necessarily have the same priorities as the residents of the County.

Land Ownership in the County (Acres)	
Private and Local Government	1,435,158
Federal Lands	1,226,400
State of Montana	217,896
Fort Peck Reservation	360,000 approximately
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>3,223,454</b>

▲ Figure 1 - Land Ownership in Valley County.

# INTRODUCTION

## VEGETATION-LAND COVER

The predominant vegetation types in the County are grassland (1,684,568 acres) and mixed cropland (1,198,635 acres), which together cover approximately 89.0 percent of the County's land area. The remaining vegetation-land cover types are Shrubland at 226,769 acres of land and water at 64,791 acres.



## MUNICIPALITIES-COMMUNITIES

The County has four incorporated municipalities: Glasgow, Fort Peck, Nashua, and Opheim.

The City of Glasgow is the County seat and major retail and service center for the County. In 2018, the City had a population of approximately 3,328. Estimated populations in the other incorporated municipalities in the County are:

- Fort Peck: 240 people
- Nashua: 291 people
- Opheim: 85 people

Some of the larger unincorporated communities in the County include Hinsdale (217 people) in the western part of the County along U.S. Highway 2, Saint Marie (450) north of Glasgow, Frazer (450) and Oswego (160) along Highway 2 in the southeast part of the County and Lustre (20) in the east central part of the County.

## HISTORY

In 1893 Dawson County was divided and its northern half became Valley County. The new County included all lands north of the Missouri River to the Canadian border and it stretched from the North Dakota border to the border of Chouteau County (approximately the Blaine/Phillips County border today) with the City of Glasgow as the County Seat. Valley County was subsequently divided several times to form other Montana counties: in 1913 to form Sheridan County, in 1915 to form Phillips County, in 1919 to form Roosevelt County, and in 1920 to form Daniels County.

American Indians inhabited the region for centuries and had ample food from the extensive buffalo, elk, and pronghorn antelope herds. The Pikuni, Nakoda, Lakota, and Dakota peoples alternately inhabited and claimed the region from the 16th to the late 19th centuries. In 1804 the Lewis and Clark expedition came within 15 miles of the future site of the City of Glasgow and noted the extensive herds of buffalo and other types of game. Between 1851 when these tribes signed their first treaty with the U.S. government and the mid-1880s buffalo and game herds declined. In 1885 the tribes engaged in the last known buffalo hunt in the region. In 1887 the tribes signed a treaty in which they ceded 17.5 million acres of land. The following year, 1888, the treaty was ratified by Congress and the Fort Peck Indian Reservation was formed, moving the tribes to the eastern portions of modern-day Valley County and most of modern-day Roosevelt County.

The City of Glasgow was founded in 1887 and was named after the City in Scotland. It was originally established as a railroad town by railroad millionaire James J. Hill. Mr. Hill was responsible for creating many of the communities along the Hi-Line. During the 1930s, Glasgow grew significantly to support the construction of the Fort Peck Dam. That project was a major employer for people in the area.

# INTRODUCTION

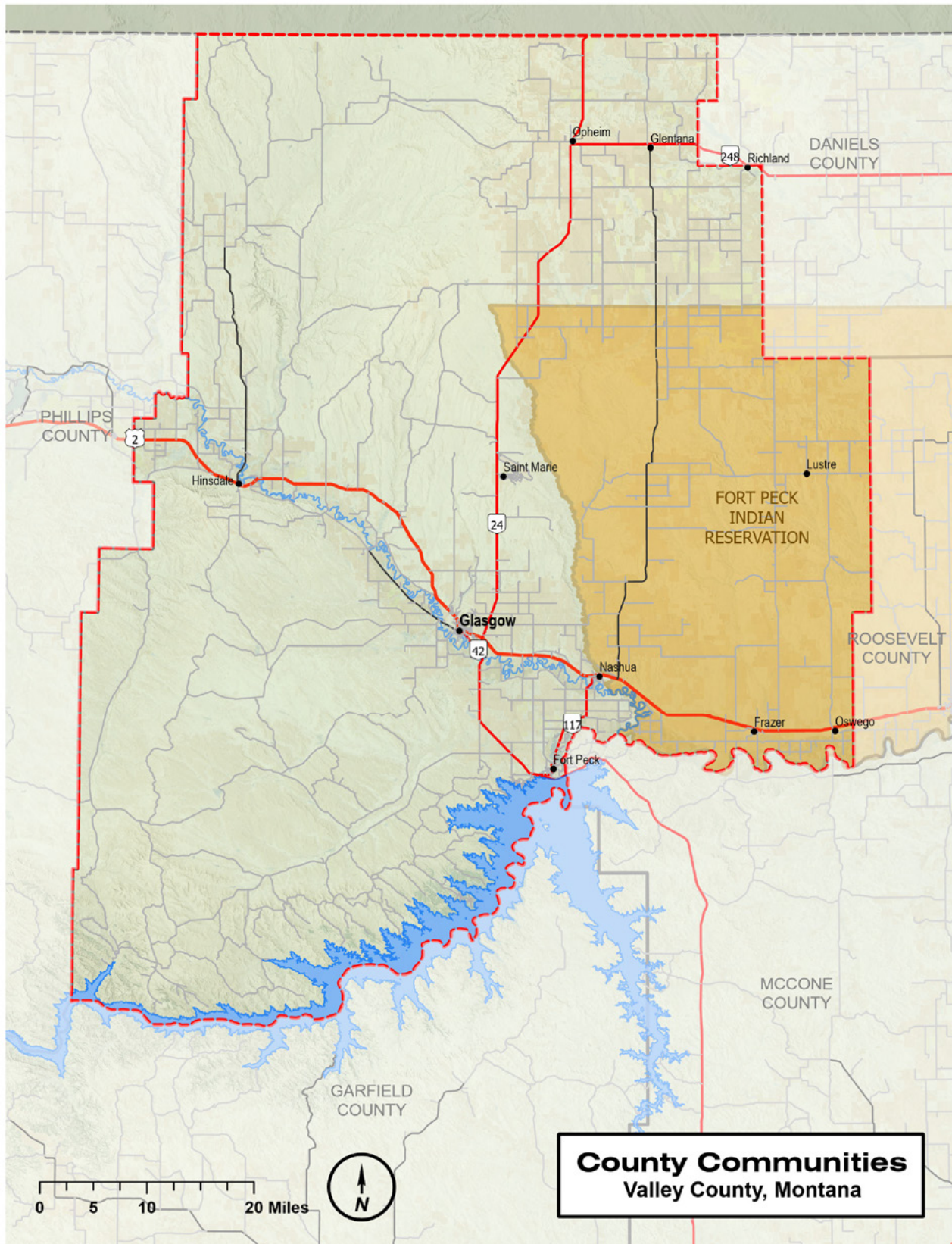
At different times during World War II the Glasgow Army Airfield housed the 96th Bombardment Squadron and 614th Bombardment Squadron. Both squadrons flew B-17 Flying Fortresses. In December of 1944, a German prisoner of war (POW) camp was established at the airfield and remained there until the end of the war. The base closed at the end of the war, and the facility eventually became the present-day Glasgow Airport.



In the 1960s, the population of the County rose dramatically due to the development of the Glasgow Air Force Base at St. Marie. The base was home to the Strategic Air Command (SAC) and B-52 bombers, which were used during the Vietnam War and the Cold War. After the deactivation and closure of the Glasgow Air Force Base in 1969, the County and the City's population began declining due to the closure of the Air Force Base and Opheim Radar Base along with the consolidation of farms in the County. Its population stabilized in the 1990s and Glasgow serves as the regional administrative, retail, and service hub for Valley County and the areas beyond.

# INTRODUCTION

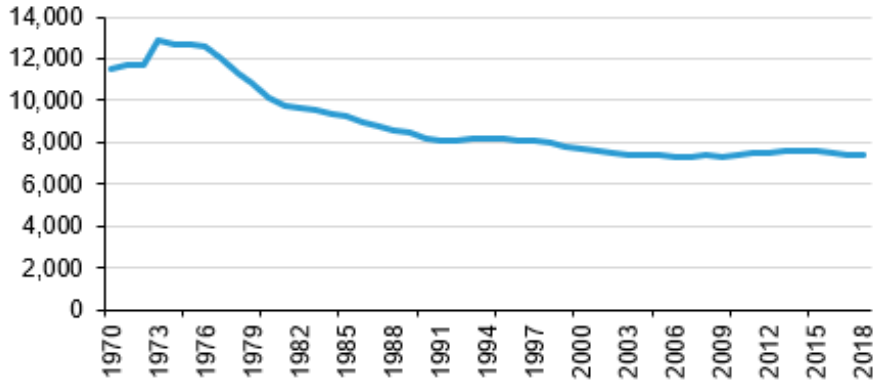
▼ Map 3 - Valley County Communities





# POPULATION

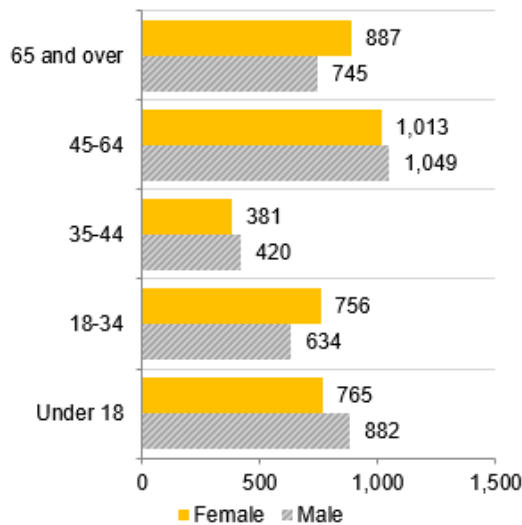
Between 1975 and 1990, the County experienced a dramatic decrease in population. In fact, the County saw an over 35 percent decrease in population over that time span. In 1975 the County’s population was approximately 12,708 people and declined to an estimated 8,175 persons by 1990. Since 1990, the population has remained fairly stable, reaching a low of 7,332 persons in 2007.



▲ Figure 2 - Population Trends, Valley County (1970-2018)  
(Census Bureau, 2019 Washington, D.C.)

Demographically, the County finds itself in an unusual situation compared to many other counties in eastern Montana, the median age of its residents has decreased. In 2010, the median age for County residents was estimated at 45.1 years of age, and by 2018 it had dropped to 44.4.

Between 2010 and 2018, the County did experience an increase in the number of people aged 18-34 which grew by an estimated 277 people. This is contrasted by a significant decrease in people ages 45-64 during the same timeframe. The decrease was estimated at 141 people.



◀ Figure 3 - Population Age Breakout for Valley County, 2018  
(Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016 Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics’ Economic Profile System ([headwaterseconomics.org/eps](http://headwaterseconomics.org/eps)))

# ECONOMY

In 2018 the four industry sectors in the County with the largest number of jobs were government (795 jobs), farming (672 jobs), accommodation and food services (426 jobs) and retail trade (227 jobs). From 2001 to 2018, the three sectors that added the most jobs were transportation and warehousing (97 new jobs), real estate and rental/leasing (90 new jobs), and accommodation and food services (88 new jobs). Healthcare employment is excluded in the graph below. There are currently about 300 healthcare jobs in Valley County.

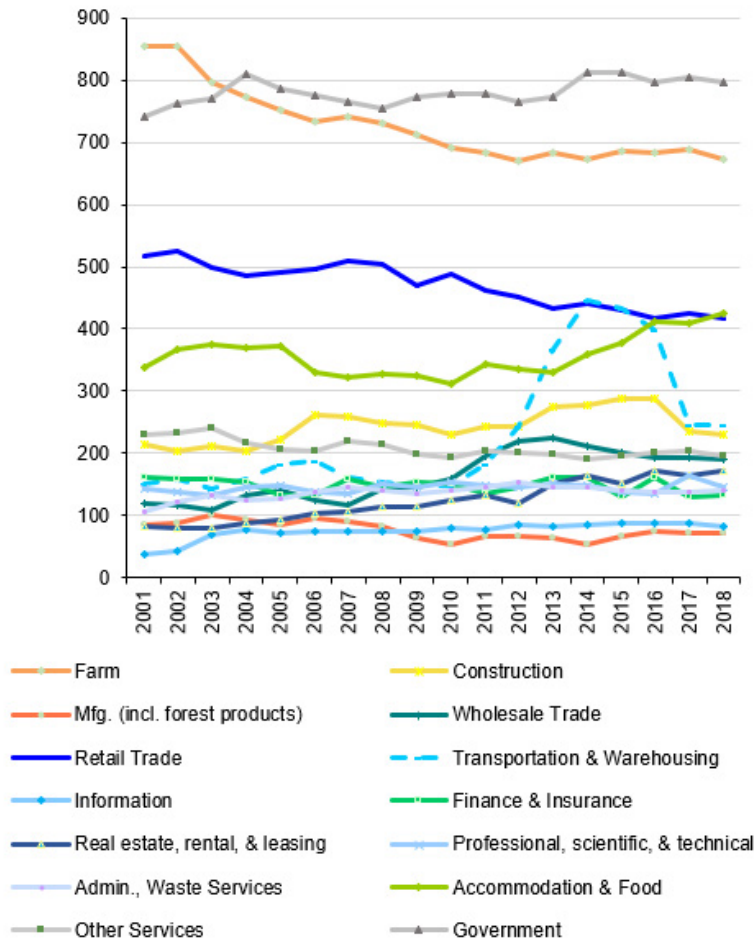


Figure 4 - Employment by Major Sector 2001-2018  
 U.S. Department of Labor. 2019. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System (headwaterseconomics.org/eps).

## LABOR AND NON-LABOR INCOME

In 2018, earnings from labor sources for County residents was almost \$180 million dollars or 50.4 percent of all income for residents. This was almost a 20 percent increase from the estimated figure of \$150 million seen in 2000.

Non-labor income for County residents in 2018 was just over \$176 million and represented 49.6 percent of all income. This was an almost 42 percent increase from the estimated non-labor income for the year 2000. Non-labor sources of income include dividends, interest, rent, and transfer payments such as Social Security and Medicare.

Please note all income data used in the Growth Policy is from the Economic Profiling System (EPS) <https://headwaterseconomics.org/apps/economic-profile-system/> and has been adjusted to real (or constant) dollars using the Consumer Price Index.

# ECONOMY

## PER CAPITA AND MEDIAN INCOME

From 1970 to 2018, per capita income in the County went from an estimated \$27,000 to almost \$48,000 a 77 percent increase over that time. Per capita income is a measure of income per person. It is total personal income (from labor and non-labor sources) divided by the total population. Per capita income is considered one of the more important measures of economic well-being for communities.



▲ Figure 5 -Components of Total Personal Income, Valley County 1970-2017  
U.S. Department of Labor. 2016. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System ([headwaterseconomics.org/eps](https://headwaterseconomics.org/eps)).

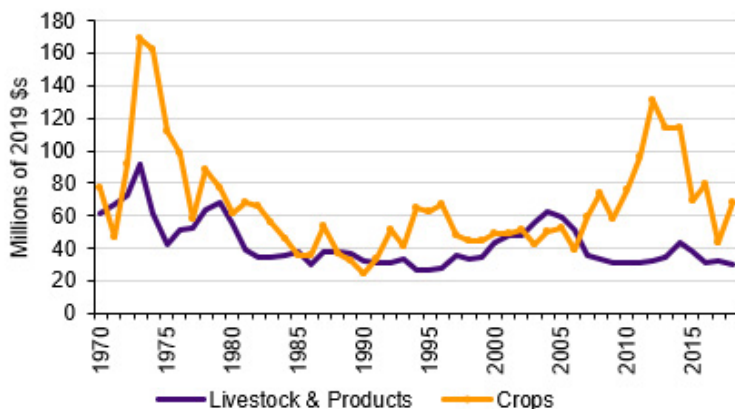
According to Census data, the median household income in the County in 2018 was almost \$56,000 and the percentage of low to moderate income families was just over 42 percent of the County's entire population in 2015.

Please note all income data used in the Growth Policy is from the Economic Profiling System (EPS) <https://headwaterseconomics.org/apps/economic-profile-system/> and has been adjusted to real (or constant) dollars using the Consumer Price Index.

## AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is one of the economic strengths of the County. In 2018, agriculture was one of the largest employers in the County, with 672 persons engaged in its operations. During 2018, cash receipts from agricultural operations exceeded \$97 million, with over \$67 million from crops and \$29 plus million from livestock.

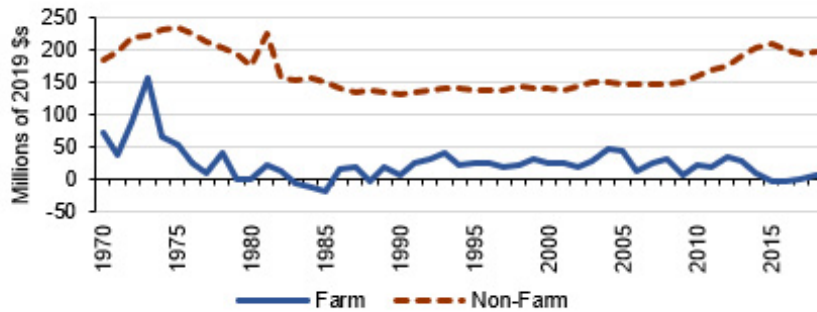
In excess of 81 percent of farm and ranch jobs and their associated income belong to owner-operators, not paid laborers. This has been a consistent trend between 1970 and 2017.



◀ Figure 6 - Cash Receipts from Agriculture in Valley County 1970-2018  
U.S. Department of Labor. 2019. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System ([headwaterseconomics.org/eps](https://headwaterseconomics.org/eps)).

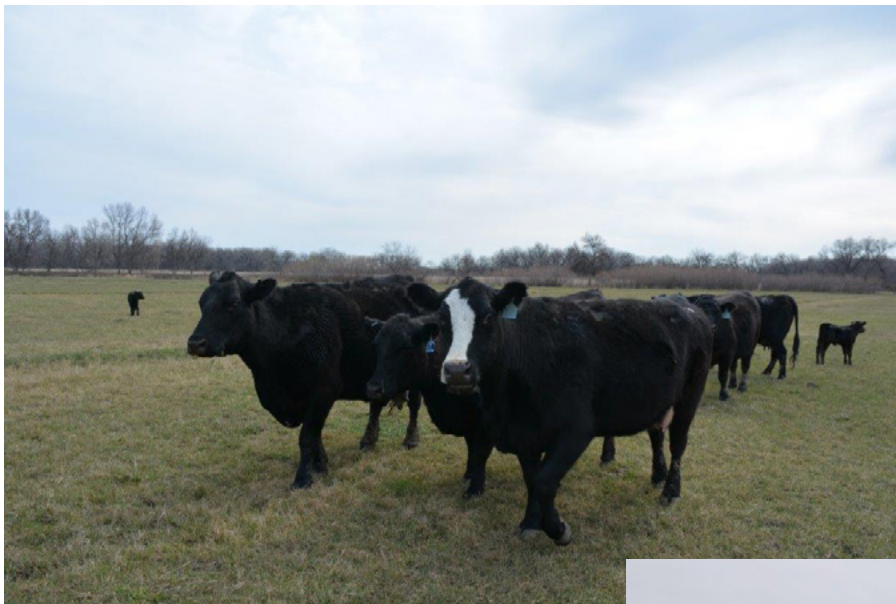
# ECONOMY

Cash receipts from the sale of crops in the County have decreased since 1970, going from \$77 million to just over \$67 million in 2018. Cash receipts from livestock have also declined during that time frame from just over \$61 million in 1970 to almost \$30 million in 2018. In 2019, it was estimated that 62,000 head of cattle were raised in the County.



◀ Figure 7 - Farm and Non-Farm Earnings 1970-2017

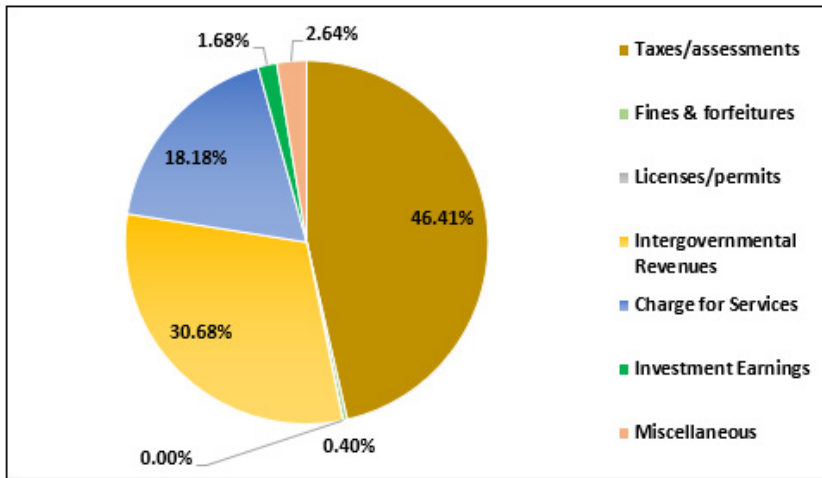
U.S. Department of Labor. 2017. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System ([headwaterseconomics.org/eps](http://headwaterseconomics.org/eps)).



# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

Providing services and maintaining infrastructure in an effective and economical manner are the primary function of the Valley County government. The services the County provides include but are not limited to administrative, judicial, road, airport, refuse disposal, healthcare, law enforcement, emergency and senior services and weed control. The infrastructure that the County is responsible for maintaining includes buildings, roads, bridges, equipment, and other facilities.

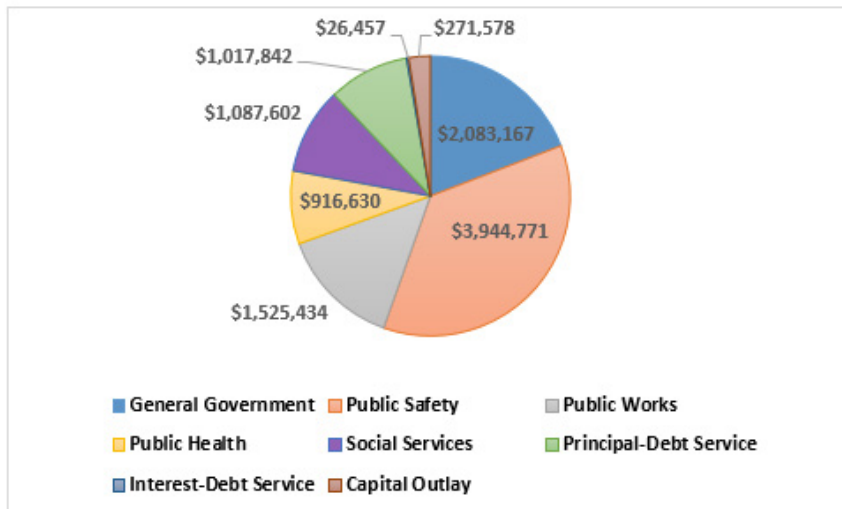
Proper funding of these services and infrastructure requires that the County collect sufficient revenues. In the fiscal year (FY) ending June 30, 2019 the County generated over \$11 million in governmental revenues. The three largest sources of revenue in that year were from State and Federal intergovernmental payments (almost \$3.4 million); taxes and assessments (just over \$5.1 million) and charges for services (just over \$1 million).



◀ Figure 8 - Valley County Governmental Revenues in FY Ending June 2019  
Financial Statements-Valley County, Montana Department of Administration, Local Government Services Bureau 2019.

It is important to note that about one-third (1/3) of the intergovernmental revenues mentioned above comes from the federal government as Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and other programs that are meant to offset the impact of state and federal lands on local government revenues. According to data from the federal government, federal payments to the County in FY 2019 totaled almost \$1.3 million. Those monies were distributed in the following manner:

- County Government \$1,117,547
- Grazing Districts \$158,978



◀ Figure 9 - Valley County Governmental Expenditures in FY Ending 2019  
Financial Statements-Valley County, Montana Department of Administration, Local Government Services Bureau 2020.

# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES



Other intergovernmental sources of revenue include state and federal grants that help to fund Senior programs, Valley County Transit, the Sheriff's department, Airport, Road and Bridge, Fire Control, Weed Control, and Health Departments.

## STRATEGY FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE

The County's new standalone capital improvements plan (CIP) will serve as the County's strategy for maintaining infrastructure per the requirements of the State Growth Policy statute 76-1-601, MCA.

The remainder of this section provides a brief description of the services and infrastructure that the County and other entities provide to residents.

## AIRPORTS

The County has four airports that are recognized by the Federal Aviation Administration. These include:

- Wokal Field-Glasgow-Valley County Airport is owned by the City of Glasgow and the County and operated by the County. Wokal Field has two runways that are both 5,000 feet long. Runway 12/30 has published instrument approaches and can land large business jets or regional airliners. Wokal Field is an essential air service airport and is served by Cape Air. The airport is also home to Northeast Montana STAT Air Ambulance that provides rapid transport to critical care patients. Aircraft repair and flight training is also available at the airport.
- Opheim Airport is jointly owned by the Town of Opheim and the County and is comprised of three turf runways that range from 1,200 feet in length to almost 2,700 feet. Runway 16/35 is 2,675 feet long and is lighted during the summer months.
- Fort Peck Airport is owned by the Army Corps of Engineers and operated by Valley County with a long-term lease agreement. They two have turf runways, Runway 05/23 is 2,700 feet long and Runway 12/30 is 4,100 feet long. Neither of the runways are lighted.

# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

- Hinsdale is owned and operated by Valley County, Hinsdale has three turf runways; Runway 07/25 is 2,200 feet long, Runway 10/28 is 2,160 feet long and Runway 16/34 1,960 feet long. Runway 7/25 is lighted upon request.
- St. Marie has a private field owned by Montana Aviation Research Company (MARCO). The field has one runway that is 13,500 feet long. Pilots must have permission from MARCO to operate from there.

## COUNTY COUNCIL ON AGING

The Valley County Council on Aging provides Senior meals at Glasgow, Fort Peck, Opheim, and Hinsdale. The Fort Peck Tribes provide Senior meals at Frazer. Other services provided by the Council include home health care, housekeeping assistance and help with government assistance programs.

## COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

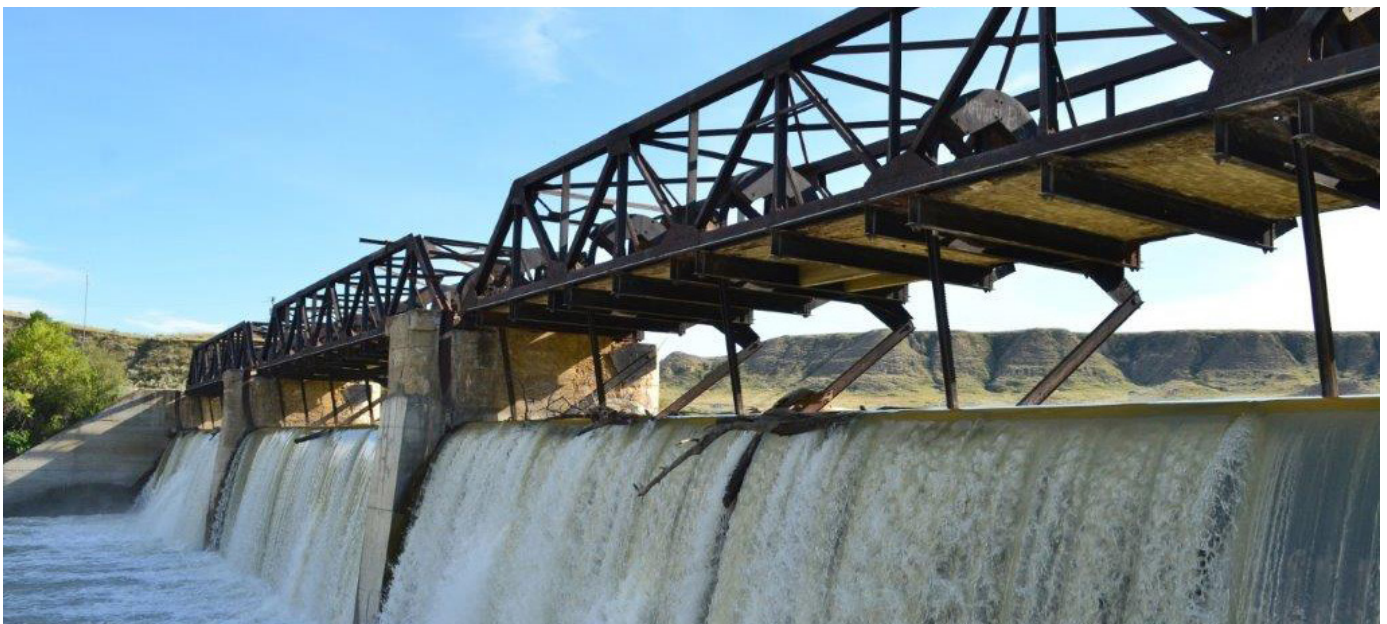
- Family Planning/Contraceptive Services
- Immunizations
- Fluoride Varnish
- Maternal Child Health
- Communicable Disease Surveillance
- Cardiac Ready Community
- Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program
- Emergency Preparedness
- Environmental Health Inspection

The County Public Health Department provides a variety of public health services to County residents. These include:

## COUNTY ROADS AND BRIDGES

Officially there are approximately 2,220 miles of County owned roads. As of 2019, the County Road Department maintains approximately 1,850 miles of those roads. Most of the roads the County maintains are gravel surfaced, but there are approximately 6 miles of paved roads.

The County is responsible for maintaining 54 bridges (all major bridges). Bridges in the County identified as major structures (clear spans greater than 20 feet in length) are inspected biennially by the Montana Department of Transportation. There are no documented minor bridges (clear spans less than 20 feet) in the County.



# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

## COUNTY WEED AND MOSQUITO DEPARTMENT

The County Weed and Mosquito Department has one full-time employee and 4 to 8 seasonal employees. Duties include the control of noxious weeds in the County and mosquitos in the Glasgow Mosquito District. The operation is housed in a shop and storage area in Glasgow, with several trucks and off-road vehicles to maintain.

## COURTHOUSE

The County Courthouse is in Glasgow and is the primary center for County services. Departments located at the Courthouse include County Commissioners, Clerk and Recorder, Treasurer, Clerk of Court, County Attorney, Sheriff, Dispatch, Detention Center, Health Department, Planning, Extension, Senior Programs, Weed and Mosquito Control, Technical Support, and Building Maintenance. The Montana Department of Revenue is also housed in the Courthouse.

Several of the County departments have citizen advisory or administrative boards who operate out of the Courthouse including the Board of Health, Refuse District, Airport, Museum, Transit, Senior Citizens, Weed and Mosquito, and Planning Board.

## EASTERN MONTANA MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

- Mental Health Services
- Outpatient Services
- Mental Health Assessment
- Individual & Group Therapy
- VA Services
- Adult & Youth Case Management
- Medication Management
- Anger Management
- Community-Based Psychiatric Recovery Services
- Substance Abuse & Dependency Services
- Outpatient Services
- Chemical Dependency Assessment
- Individual & Group Therapy
- VA Services
- Case Management
- Prime For Life Classes via Telemed
- MIP Classes via Telemed

## FAIRGROUNDS

The fairgrounds is one of the social and cultural centers in the County. It hosts many events including the annual Northeast Montana Fair, rodeos, etc. The Valley County Fair Board manages the fairgrounds and the events held there.

## FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Valley County has roughly 115 volunteer firefighters and 8 satellite fire stations in the county:

- Glasgow Long Run
- Saint Marie
- Opheim
- Richland
- Nashua
- Fort Peck
- Hinsdale
- Pines Recreational Area

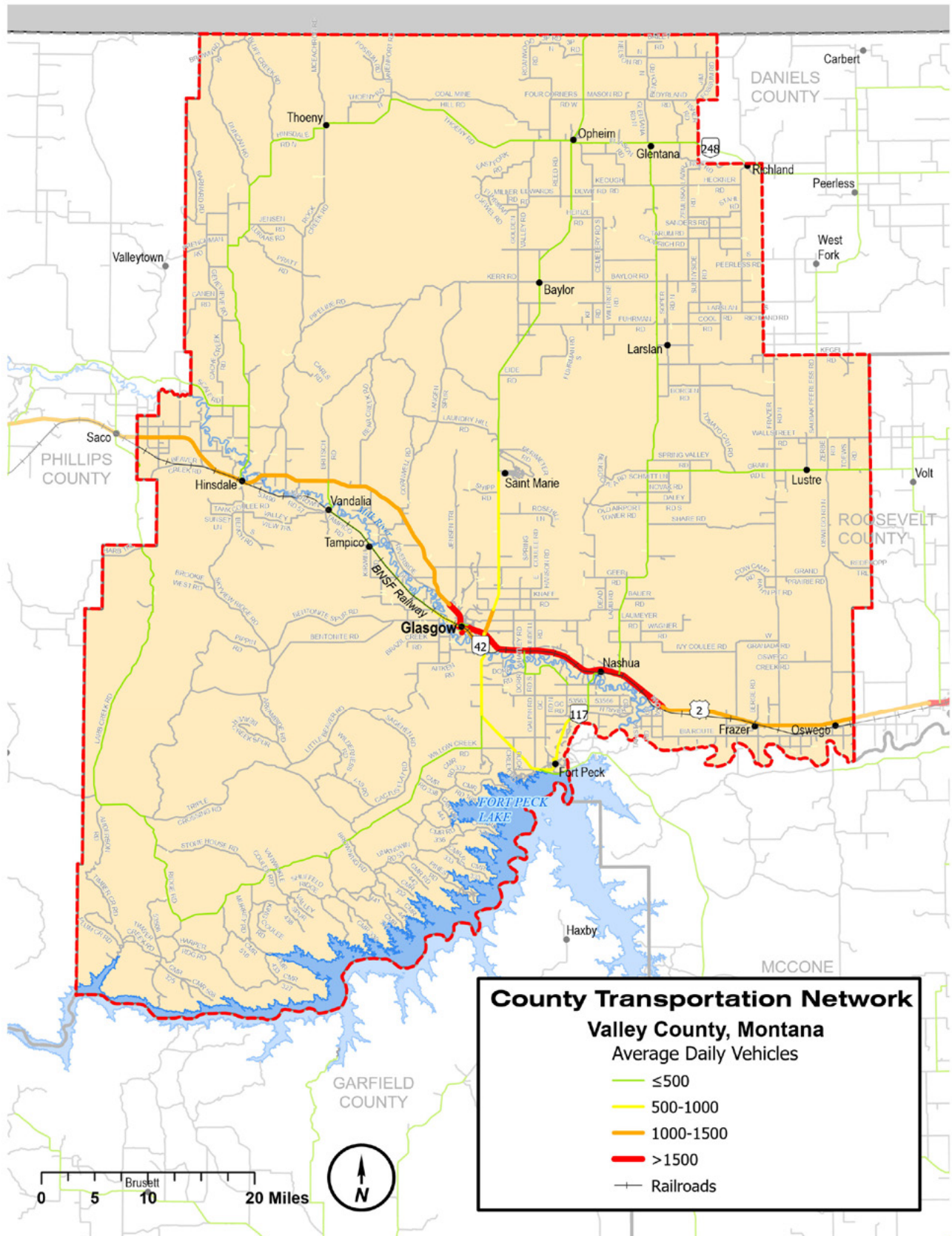
## FRANCIS MAHON DEACONESS HOSPITAL

Francis Mahon Deaconess Hospital is in Glasgow and is one of the County's largest employers. It is a privately owned medical facility, but Valley County does provide some funding to support hospital ambulance services. The facility provides primary and secondary care services to residents throughout Northeastern Montana. The hospital maintains a 25-bed care facility. The hospital employs approximately 230 full-time employees and approximately 25 part-time employees. Staff includes physicians, allied health staff (PAs, FNPs, CRNAs, specialists), radiologists and dental. Valley County Provides \$32,000 in financial support to Frances Mahon Deaconess Hospital (FMDH) for operation of the hospital owned ground ambulance services. Volunteer rural ambulance services are in Hinsdale, Opheim, and Lustre, as well as the services in Glasgow. The Northeast Montana STAT Air Ambulance Cooperative is a partnership of FMDH, the Phillips County Hospital and Northeast Montana Health Services that provides Northeast Montana critically ill patients air transportation to Billings, and Great Falls. Patients can also be transported to larger hospitals such as Salt Lake City, Seattle, Rochester, or Boulder. STAT Air operates out of Wokal Field in Glasgow.



# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

▼ Map 4 - Valley County Transportation Network



# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

## GLASGOW CITY-COUNTY LIBRARY

The City-County Library is jointly funded by Valley County and the City of Glasgow. The library is housed in its own facility in Glasgow and the property is owned by the City of Glasgow and the employees work for the City. Some of the library's services include providing books and periodicals, internet access, multi-media, outreach and education programs, and a book club.

## GLASGOW IRRIGATION DISTRICT

The purpose of the Glasgow Irrigation District is to deliver irrigation water equitably to all water users within the irrigation district in an efficient, sustainable manner and at a reasonable cost, while conserving soil and water resources and minimizing waste.

## GLASGOW POOL

The existing Glasgow Pool was built in 1974 and due to costly repairs, a committee was formed that is dedicated to raising money toward a new pool for the area. The new facility will provide infrastructure for the citizens of Valley County with a safe and reliable swimming pool that meets their educational, physical fitness and recreational needs. It will also give our children access to swimming lessons, which are so important in Valley County due to our proximity to Fort Peck Lake, and the Missouri and Milk Rivers.

## RURAL WATER

Dry Prairie Rural Water is a regional water project that addresses serious water problems in the region. Many rural residents cannot use their existing water source without extensive treatment, because ground water in northeastern Montana contains concentrations of sulfates and total dissolved solids that exceed the safe drinking water guidelines. Dry Prairie Rural Water was authorized by Congress as the State of Montana's first Regional Water Authority in January 2000. The Fort Peck-Dry Prairie Regional Water System, under construction in the northeastern part of the state, is a project of considerable scale, designed to bring high quality drinking water to residents of the region, with an authorized price tag of \$193 million (1998 dollars). The on-Reservation portion costs are paid totally by the Federal government, and the off-Reservation portion has a 76% Federal, 24% combined State/Dry Prairie split.

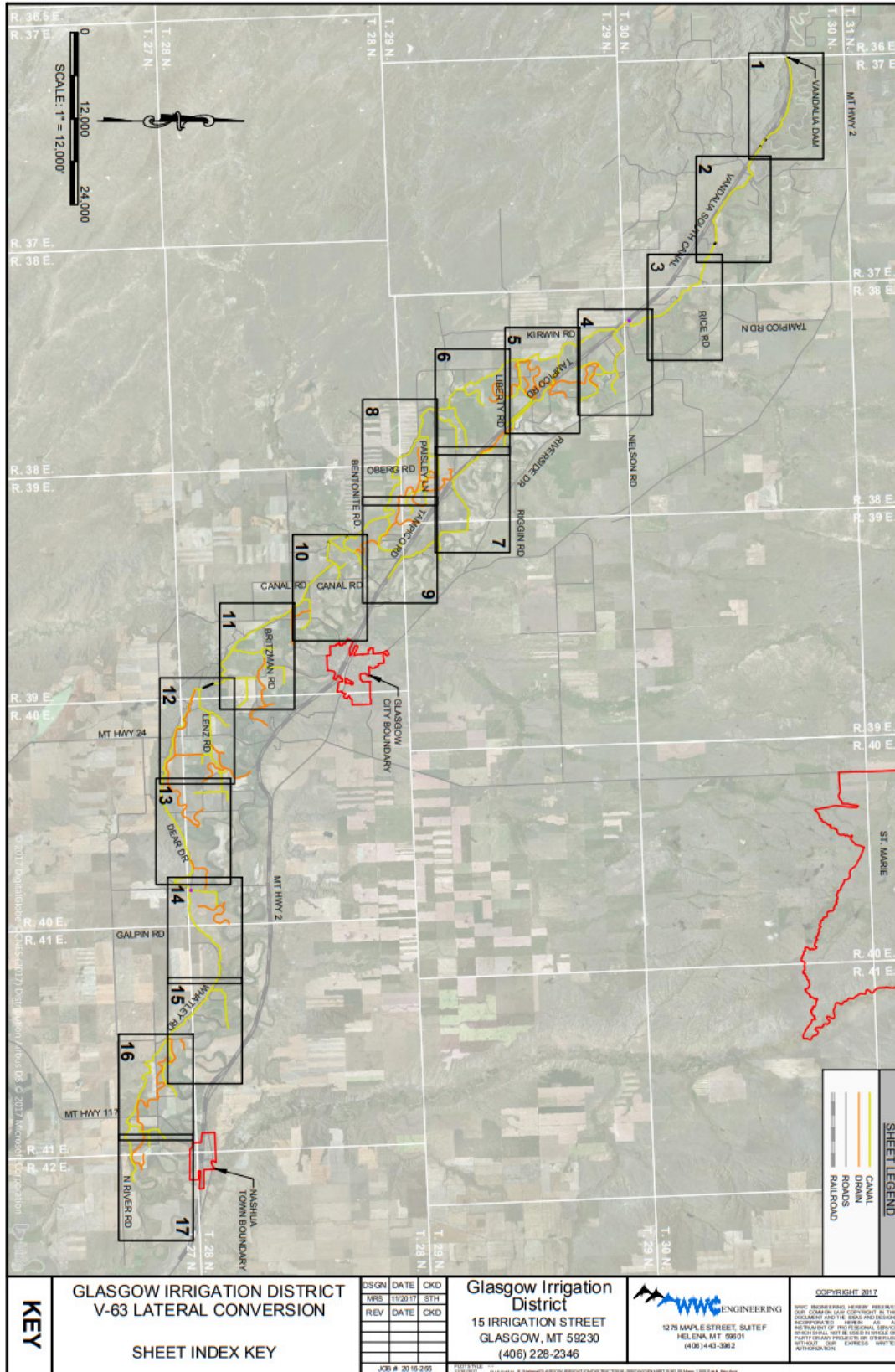
The Fort Peck Rural County Water District (FPRCWD) is a quasi-county corporation and political subdivision of the State of Montana located in northeastern Montana that is organized under Title 7 Chapter 13, Parts 22 and 24 of the Montana statutes. The stated purpose of the District was to promote economic growth and development – residential and commercial – in Valley County, specifically the Fort Peck Recreation Areas and subdivisions within the District. The District is not associated with a town, city or reservation.

Currently, the District serves 360 customers, some of which are seasonal. The District's original service area was 24,160 acres. Approximately 3,850 acres have been petitioned into the District since 2000; its current service area is approximately 24,574 acres (about 38 square miles) serving 7,600 acres. Of its 360 services, 6 are commercial including the Fish Wildlife & Parks' Fish Hatchery, the Corps of Engineers facilities, the Gateway Club, the Lakeridge, and the trailer park in Park Grove, as well as two fish-cleaning stations operated by the Corps of Engineers.



# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

▼ Map 5 - Irrigation District



# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

## SCHOOLS

Valley County has eight official school districts. Information from the Montana Office of Public Instruction shows the following facts about each District:

District	Grades	Number of Schools	Estimated Student Numbers	Student/Teacher Ratio
Frazer Elementary School	Pre-K - 8th	1	104	6:1
Frazer High School	9th - 12th	1	30	3:1
Glasgow K-12 Schools	Pre-K - 12th	3	348 185 241	11:1
Hinsdale Elementary	Pre-K - 8th	1	80	6:1
Hinsdale High School	9th - 12th	1	29	5:1
Lustre Elementary	Pre-K - 8th	1	38	10:1
Lustre High School	9th - 12th	1	25	7:1
Nashua K-12 Schools	Pre-K - 12th	1	128	7:1
Opheim K-12 Schools	Pre-K - 12th	1	36	5:1

## SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

The Valley County Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement for the entire County. The County Sheriff supervises a regular force of 8 deputies, plus the staff of the Detention Center and Dispatch Center. The County Search and Rescue is a volunteer organization and operates at the direction of the Sheriff.

## UTILITIES-TELECOMMUNICATION-BROADBAND

Electric Utilities are provided to County residents by NorVal Electrical Cooperative and Northwestern Energy. Natural Gas is provided to Glasgow and other municipalities in the County by Montana Dakota Utilities.

Mid-Rivers Telephone and Nemont Telephone Cooperatives provide for the County's telecommunication and Internet needs through Asymmetric digital subscriber lines (ADSL), redundant Internet service and cell phone coverage.

## VALLEY COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Conservation Districts (CDs) are units of local government designed to assist citizens conserve their soil, water and other renewable natural resources through prevention of soil erosion; promoting the conservation, development, use and disposal of water; preserving wildlife habitat; improving rangeland; and conducting public conservation programs.

CDs have been entrusted by the state with mandated activities such as implementation of the 310 Law, water reservations, stream access portage routes, county planning board participation, and local Total Maximum Daily Load, (TMDL), consultation. The CD also has a role in educating landowners about sound conservation practices, tree planting and organizing outdoor classroom education activities for school children.

# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

## VALLEY COUNTY LANDFILL - REFUSE DISPOSAL DISTRICT

Valley County operates a County-wide Refuse District, which includes a landfill facility and twelve (12) remote transfer stations located throughout the County. The District is an enterprise funded by fees and assessments and takes refuse from other counties.

## VALLEY COUNTY PIONEER MUSEUM

In Glasgow, visitors can experience the history of Northeastern Montana's Valley County through the country's largest Assiniboine collection, railroad and agriculture displays, the creation of the Fort Peck Dam, Lewis and Clark, and stories from the Titanic. The museum also has extensive genealogical archives and a vast library filled with many books about Montana, and Valley County, featuring Montana authors.

## VALLEY VIEW HOME

Valley View Home is the primary facility in the County that provides senior services such as nursing home, memory care and adult day care. In 2018 County voters approved a 5-year annual levy of \$300,000 to help keep the facility financially solvent. As the current management staff of the facility makes progress toward financial self-sufficiency it is hoped that the levy will not be needed in the future. Prairie Ridge Village in Glasgow provides independent and assisted living for seniors.

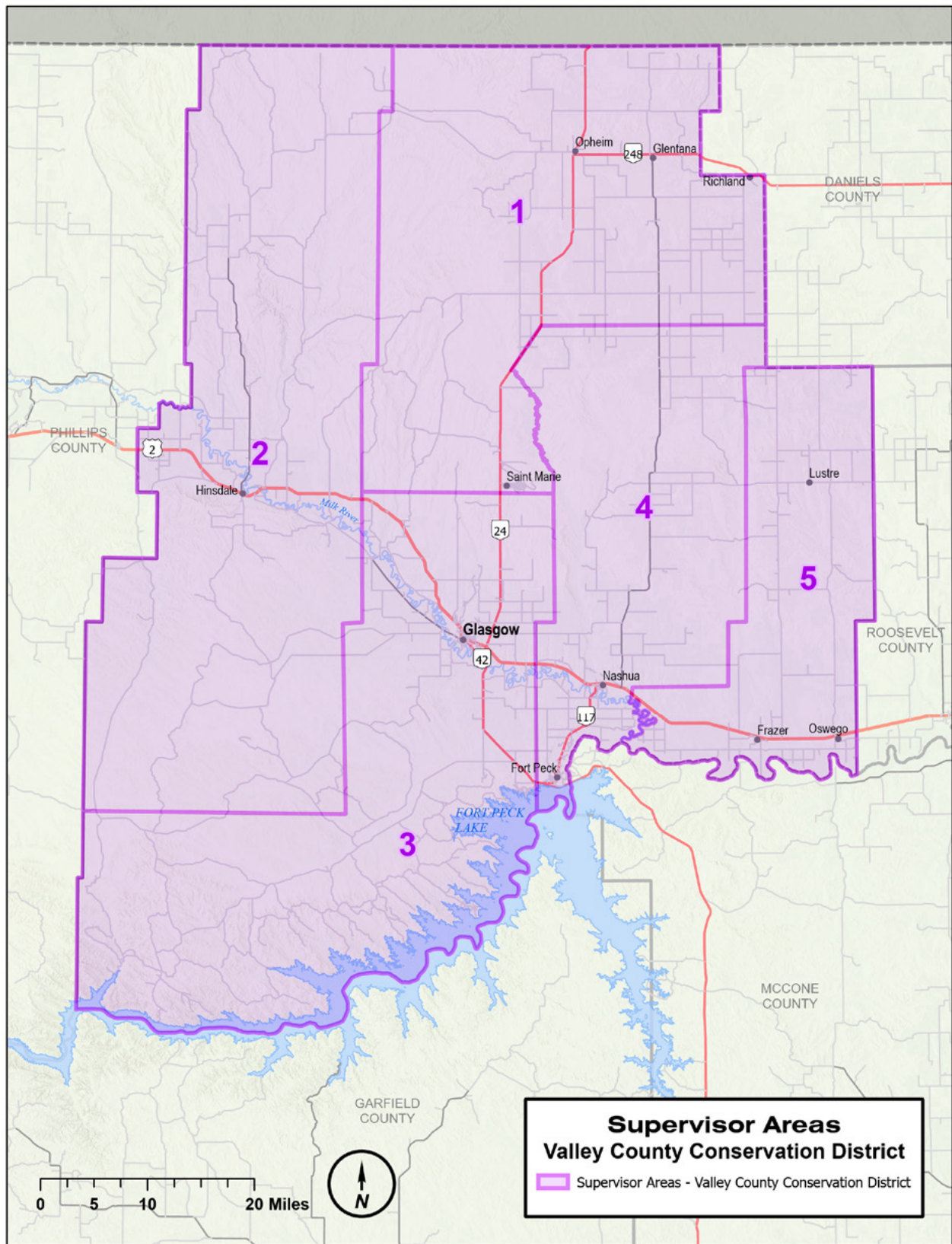
## VALLEY COUNTY TRANSIT

County Transit employs 12 people to operate a public transportation system serving Valley County. Funding for this system is primarily from federal moneys via the Montana Department of Transportation. Funding of the drivers, dispatcher and supervisor, buses, vans, and a large bus garage is provided through the Transit budget.

The transit service provides same day, door-to-door, shared ride service within Glasgow and in a 2-mile radius of the City. There are also scheduled weekday rides between Nashua, Fort Peck and Glasgow and daily scheduled rides between St. Marie and Glasgow.

# LOCAL SERVICES & PUBLIC FACILITIES

▼ Map 6 - Valley County Conservation District



# HOUSING

Data from the American Community Survey of the Census Bureau estimated that there were 4,858 residential housing units in the County in 2018. Of those units, 3,436 were occupied while 1,422 units were not. It is important to note that the large number of vacant housing units present on the abandoned Glasgow Air Force Base at St Marie are included in these figures.

Housing age data was available from the Census for 3,978 of the housing units in the County. That data shows that over 48 percent of units were constructed before 1970.

Year Built	Number of Units	Percentage
2010 or later	66	1.7%
2000 to 2009	147	3.7%
1990 to 1999	250	6.3%
1980 to 1989	290	7.2%
1970 to 1979	875	22%
Older than 1969	2,350	59.1%

▲ Figure 10 - Age of Residential Structures in Valley County in 2018  
(Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Average from 2014-2018, Washington, D.C., as reported in Headwaters Economics' Economic Profile System ([headwaterseconomics.org/eps](http://headwaterseconomics.org/eps)))

In 2018, housing appeared to remain relatively affordable in the County. An important indicator of economic strain on households is whether housing is affordable. Household income used to pay for housing costs that are below 15 percent of total household income can be an indication of highly affordable housing prices in a community. Conversely if the share of household income devoted to housing that is above 30 percent of total income, this can indicate unaffordable housing.

Owner-occupied households in Valley County where more than 30 percent of household income were spent on mortgage costs included only 13.5 percent of the population, while in Montana as a whole, it was estimated at 29.2 percent. Renter-occupied households in the County where more than 30 percent of household income was spent on rent was only 20.8 percent of the population versus Montana where it was estimated at 40.1 percent.

**Nemont Manor** is in Glasgow, has apartments for people over 50, or that are disabled. Utilities and maintenance services are included, along with free bus rides on weekdays.

**Prairie Ridge Village** is located two blocks from downtown Glasgow and provides independent or assisted living services as well as meals and social activities.

## HOUSING NEEDS

The County and the municipalities in the County should consider developing a housing assessment and plan to identify housing needs more accurately in the County and its communities.

# LAND USE

## KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE PROJECT

The proposed pipeline would transport crude oil from Alberta, Canada to the United States with a focus on oil terminals in Oklahoma and Texas. The proposed pipeline would consist of approximately 1,711 miles of new 36-inch-diameter pipeline, with approximately 327 miles located in Canada and 1,384 miles located in the U.S. The pipeline would cross six Montana counties including Phillips, Valley, McCone, Dawson, Prairie and Fallon. As of January 2021, newly elected President Joe Biden has revoked the permit for the project, by executive order. Efforts are underway in 2021 to rescue the pipeline project.

A significant length of the pipeline and one pump station would be located within Valley County. The project would provide a significant economic boost to the County in the form of increased property tax collections, jobs, and expenditures at local businesses during the construction phase.

According to a letter of support for the project drafted by the Valley County Commission the project would increase property tax revenues annually by approximately 50 percent. This would be an additional \$7 million dollars paid to the County. Of that \$7 million, approximately \$1 million would go directly to support County services.

## FORT PECK INDIAN RESERVATION

The Fort Peck Indian Reservation is home to the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes and is the ninth-largest Indian Reservation in the United States. The Reservation encompasses much of the eastern portion of the County and Tribal lands make up over 715,000 acres of land in the County of which approximately half is privately owned.

The government of the Reservation has jurisdiction over most activities inside of the reservation borders. The tribes have their own court system, jail, treatment center, and a Tribal newspaper.

The Valley County Road Department and Fort Peck Tribe have an agreement to share maintenance of roads located within the Reservation. The Tribal Police, Bureau of Indian Affairs and Valley County Sheriff cooperate in law enforcement.

## OIL AND GAS PRODUCTION

Valley County contains petroleum resources that have produced a modest amount of oil and natural gas over the last 30 years. According to the Montana Board of Oil and Gas Conservation (MBOGC) 628 total wells have been drilled in the County, with 136 currently still active. According to U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis data in 2018 32 people were employed in the “mining” industry sector in the County, which includes employment in oil and gas production.

Production of oil in the County has steadily declined over the last 30 plus years, while natural gas production has increased. For example, in 1990 oil production in the County was 314,000 barrels. In 2019, the amount had declined to 68,631 barrels. During this same time the production of gas went from 427,055 million cubic feet (MCF) to 714,181 MCF. The reduction in oil is likely due to the decrease in the value of petroleum products such as gasoline, while the increase in natural gas production may be explained by an increase in its use for electrical power production. If petroleum prices increase in the future, as they are likely to do, oil production may again increase. In addition, the development of new extraction technologies could make oil production in the County more cost-effective.



# LAND USE

## STATE AND FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT

The livestock industry in Valley County is heavily dependent on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) grazing permits. The County Commissioners recognize the economic loss that would result with a reduction or loss of these grazing permits. Additionally, BLM policies concerning development of oil and gas, wilderness designations, special status wildlife species and a host of other issues directly affect the economy of Valley County. The County Commissioners communicate regularly with BLM managers and assert the position of the County in land use plans and decisions. Management of the Charles M Russel (CMR) Wildlife Refuge is also a concern to the Commissioners.

In response to a plan by the American Prairie Reserve (APR) to create a 3-million-acre wildlife preserve which would include much of western Valley County, the County Commission has joined with neighboring counties to form a coalition to protect the multiple use on BLM and CMR lands and oppose the creation of the APR.

The County developed a Resource Use Plan to ensure that federal and state agencies will coordinate and consider the County's plans and policies before implementing management plans and actions within the County that would affect its residents. Federal and state laws require federal and state agencies to coordinate with the County and consider the local land use plans in the process of planning and managing federal and state lands within the geographic boundaries of Valley County.

The primary purpose of the Resource Use Plan is to foster cooperation and coordination between federal and state management agencies and Valley County on a variety of issues including but not limited to grazing, farming, energy development, recreation, wildlife, and all other activities related to the management of federal, state, and private lands.

## SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

The County's current subdivision regulations were adopted in 2007. Subdivision regulations are meant to address issues related to creation of new residential and commercial lots, including ensuring accurate surveying, providing legal and physical access, provision of utilities, parkland requirements, right-of-way location and mitigating hazards. Due to numerous legislative changes to the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act since 2007, the County is in the process of updating its Subdivision Regulations.

## BUILDINGS FOR LEASE OR RENT REGULATIONS

Along with Subdivision Regulations, state statute (Title 76, Chapter 8, Montana Code Annotated) requires every jurisdiction in the state to adopt regulations addressing the lease or renting of buildings for residential and commercial purposes. The exception to this requirement is if certain criteria are met, such as the existence of zoning regulations in the jurisdiction. Thus, the County should determine what regulations they are required by law to have, and then develop and adopt them.

## FLOODING AND FLOODPLAIN REGULATIONS

According to the current Valley County Predisaster Mitigation Plan, between 1996 and 2015, there were 82 flood events reported in the County. In 2014, there were nine flood and flash



# LAND USE

flood events reported at various locations throughout the County and these events caused over \$1 million in property damage.

The County Predisaster Mitigation Plan also indicates that between 2011 and 2014 there have been three FEMA disaster declarations. One declaration was for flooding in 2011 which affected 35 sites, causing estimated damages of over \$1 million. A 2013 flood declaration affected 15 sites and caused total damages of \$270,000. A 2014 declaration for a flood event that affected 65 sites caused damages of almost \$3 million.

Valley County participates in the National Flood Insurance Program administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The current County Floodplain Regulations were adopted in 1991. Since that time, significant changes have occurred to the Montana state statutes and administrative rules as well as to Federal requirements. To meet state and federal requirements, the County should consider amending its floodplain regulations using the State of Montana Model Floodplain Regulations which were developed by the Floodplain Program at the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. Updating the County floodplain regulations based on this model will ensure that they comply with both state and federal requirements.

## SAND & GRAVEL RESOURCES

According to soils mapping by the United States Geologic Survey, the County contains relatively good sand and gravel resources, particularly along the Milk River upstream from Hinsdale and along the Missouri River between Nashua and Frazer. In addition, there are considerable resources in the eastern portion of the County near the boundary with Daniels and Roosevelt Counties. According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality Open Cut Mining Program there are twenty-one (21) gravel pits permitted in the County, but only six (6) are currently in use.

See Map 7 for the location of active gravel pits in the County.

## WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE (WUI)

A substantial proportion of the County is identified as being located within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). The Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) in the County is defined as the zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuel. In northeast Montana, the WUI is typically located where the edge of communities or development is adjacent to agricultural and non-irrigated fields. In Valley County those communities designated as “Communities at Risk” to wildfire and listed in the Federal Register include:

- Duck Creek
- Fort Peck
- Fort Peck Cabins
- Glasgow
- Glentana
- Hinsdale
- Nashua
- Opheim
- Pines
- Richland
- Tampico
- Vandalia

See Map 8 from the Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC) for the location of the WUI in the County as determined by DNRC in 2011.

According to the 2016 Valley County Predisaster Mitigation Plan, the County has a long history of wildfires that have caused a range of damages. According to the Valley County Emergency Operations Plan, it is estimated that close to 200 wildfire starts occur annually in the County. The extent of damage caused by these fires often depends upon the fire’s rate of spread, the effectiveness of suppression, mitigation measures taken, and the type of property and infrastructure involved. A history of wildfires in the County would be difficult to document due to the various fire fighting entities involved and a variety of record keeping measures used over the years. See Maps 9 and 10 for the

# LAND USE

wildfire risk rating in the County for the years 2014 and 2018. From these maps you can see that the wildfire risk in the County can vary widely depending upon precipitation and other factors each year.

Valley County has significant residential development in the wildland-urban interface (WUI), particularly along the north shore of Fort Peck Lake. Residential development in the WUI can pose a challenge for the County, State and Federal agencies to provide wildland fire protection. Protecting residential homes built in the WUI is expensive and often puts fire protection agencies in a difficult position of choosing between either protecting structures or the safety of firefighters. This situation can be made worse if homes are accessed via poorly constructed, dead-end roads, limited to no fire protection water supplies and little defensible space present between vegetation and the structures.

The current Valley County Subdivision Regulations contain specific standards that try to address new subdivisions located within the (Areas of High Fire Hazard) Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). The standards are found in Section VI-R of the regulations and include some of the following requirements:

- Minimum of two access roads to provide escape and access routes for fire fighting vehicles.
- Road rights-of-way maintained free of vegetation and other fire fuels.
- Roads, bridges, culverts, and auto gates designed to allow access by fire equipment.
- Building sites prohibited on slopes greater than 25 percent.
- Minimum lot densities in areas of steep slopes or dense forest growth.
- Water supplies of sufficient volume for effective fire control.
- Water storage facilities available via all-season and accessible vehicle routes.
- Defensible space from vegetation around structures and fire protection facilities.

## ST. MARIE

The community of St. Marie is a census-designated place (CDP) in the County. St. Marie was developed to house the personnel from the Glasgow Air Force Base. At one time the community was home to over 7,000 people. When the Air Force Base was decommissioned in 1976 the community experienced a dramatic population decline in a very short period of time.

According to narrative provided by Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St.\\_Marie,\\_Montana](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Marie,_Montana)

“When the Air Force base was decommissioned, the on-base housing was purchased and offered for sale to private individuals. While many of the bids for the houses were from salvage companies, the community ultimately escaped demolition. Homes which had housed thousands of military personnel when the base was in operation were briefly promoted as condominiums for retirees. Despite local efforts, most of the re-purposed housing units sit empty and abandoned.”

The United States Census Bureau estimates that in 2019 the St. Marie CDP (22.9 square miles) had a population of 470 people.

During the Planning Board’s open house in St. Marie in the Spring of 2021, residents identified the following issues that they are hoping to have addressed in the future:

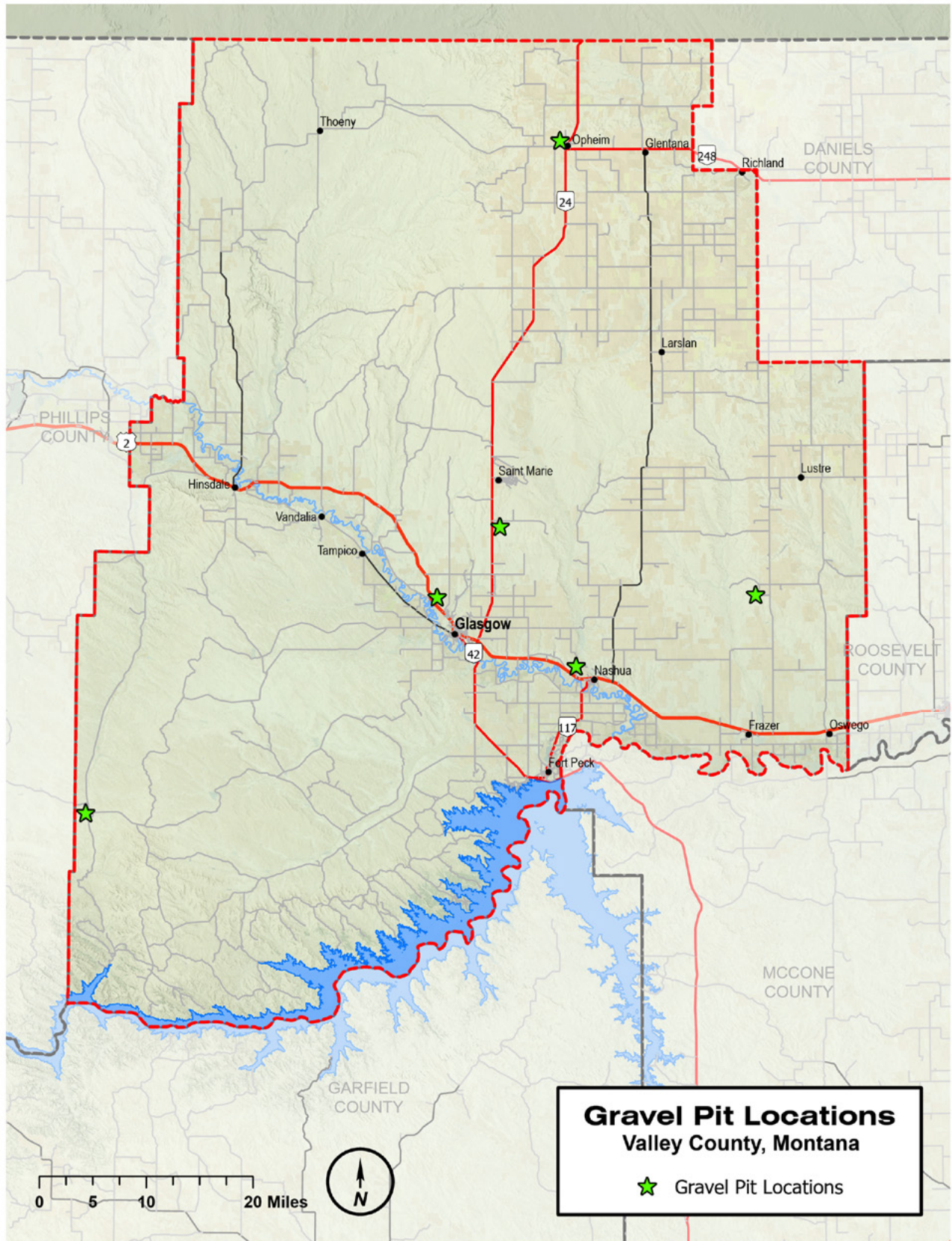
1. Find a way to identify legal complications with property ownership and attempt to resolve them.

# LAND USE

2. Develop a plan for identify properties with derelict buildings and how to remove them.
3. Complete basic safety measures such:
  - a. Clearing trees and foliage around abandoned buildings to reduce fire hazard.
  - b. Identify options to remove hazardous and nuisance buildings
  - c. Address the removal of asbestos in the community’s buildings
  - d. Identify and address liability issues with playground equipment and maintain, renovate, and replace equipment.
4. Improve the roads within St. Marie.
5. Evaluate the needs of youth in the community and provide them with social and active opportunities such as a youth club, playground, youth center or gym.
6. Examine the potential to establish a coop store for residents.
7. Work to help residents develop a sense of “community”.

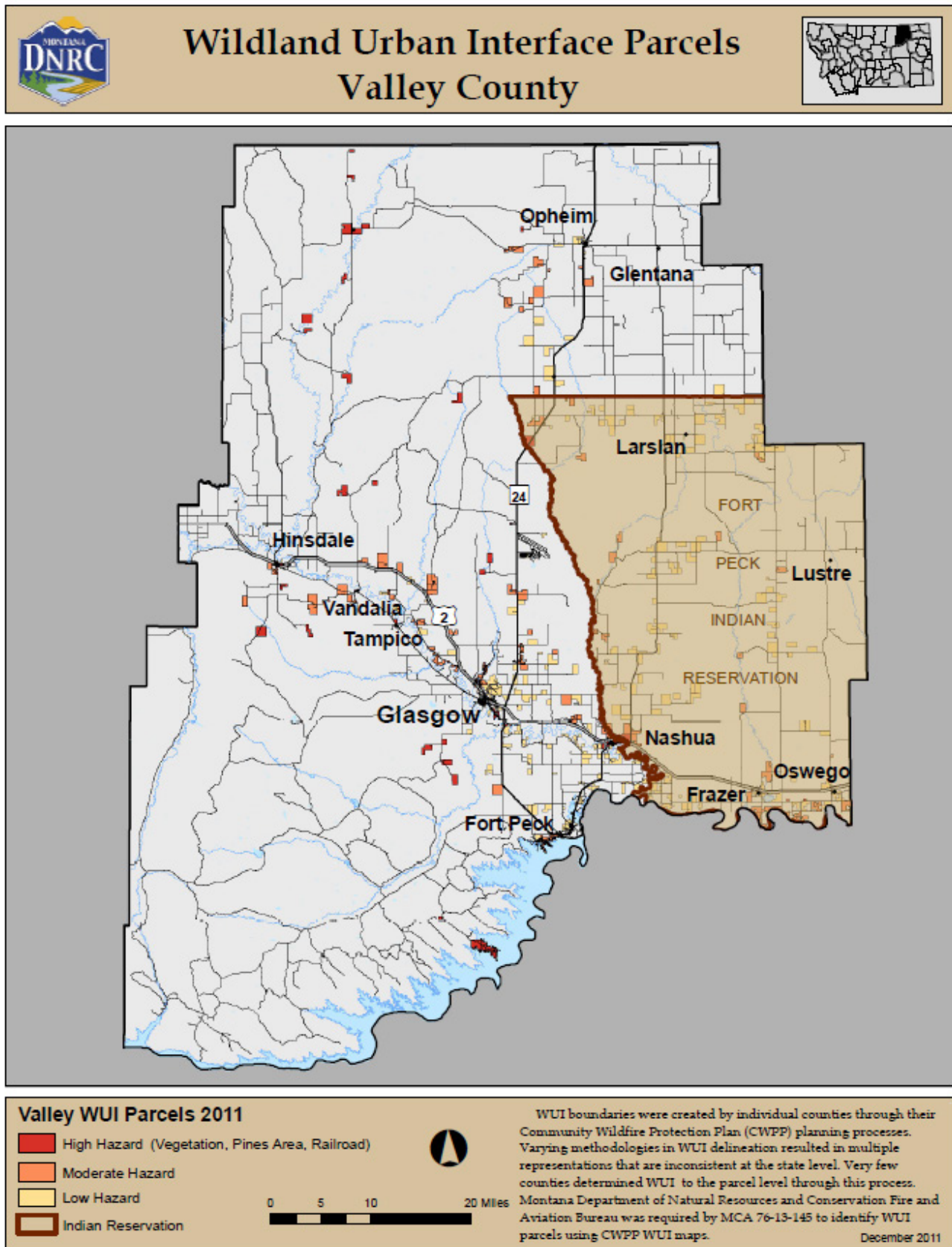
# LAND USE

▼ Map 7 – Active Gravel Pits in Valley County



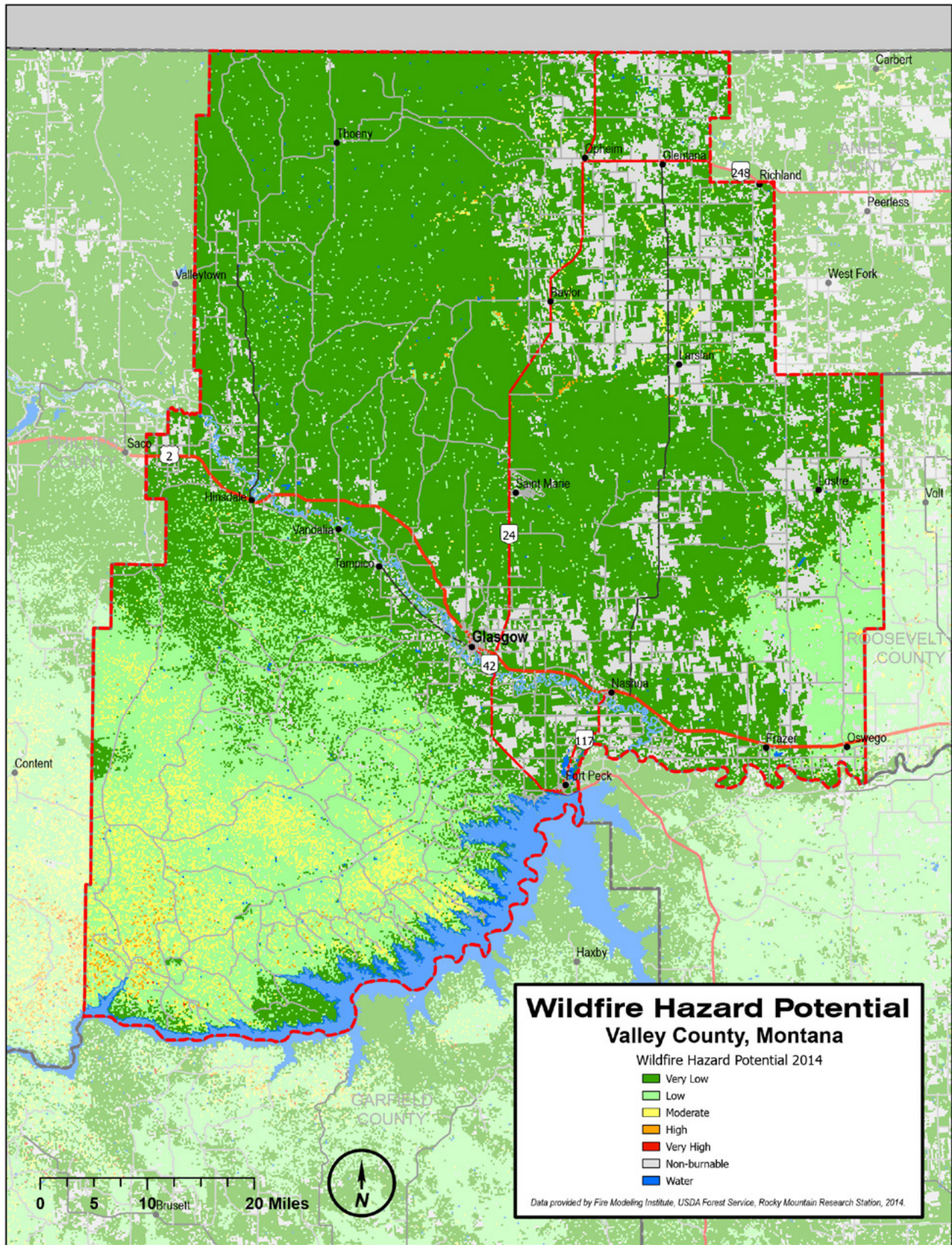
# LAND USE

▼ Map 8 – MT DNRC 2011 Wildland Urban Interface for Valley County



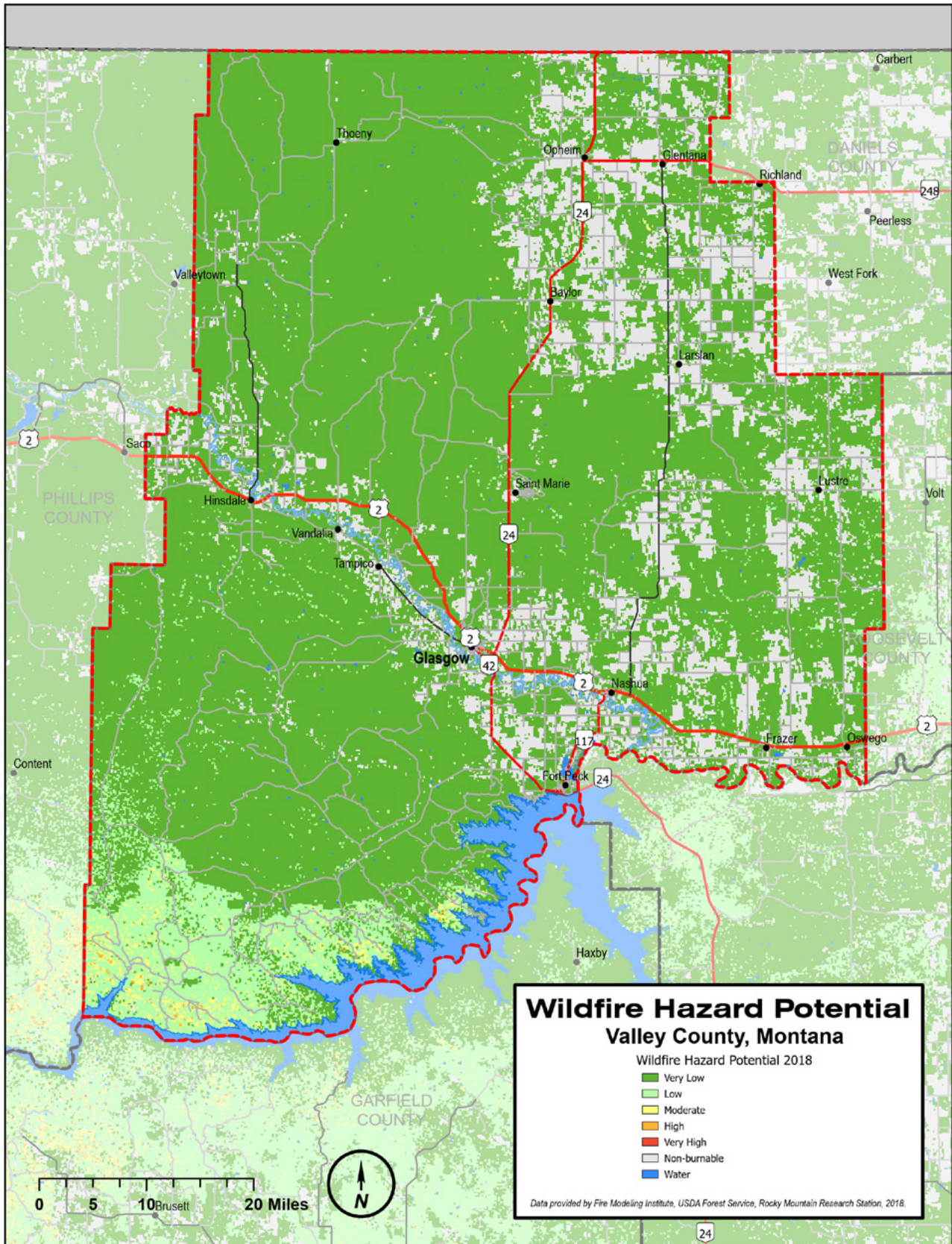
# LAND USE

▼ Map 9 – 2014 Wildfire Risk Rating Valley County



# LAND USE

▼ Map 10 – 2018 Wildfire Risk Rating Valley County





# RESIDENT OUTREACH

Gathering the ideas and advice of County residents was an important step in updating the County Growth Policy. Outreach to residents included the use of an online and hardcopy survey, Planning Board work sessions, and the Board's public hearing.

The main effort in updating the Growth Policy was undertaken by the County Planning Board. The Planning Board held a total of seven (7) public work sessions to discuss the creation of the Growth Policy. Work sessions were held on the following dates at the County Courthouse:

- July 23, 2020
- August 20, 2020
- November 18, 2020
- December 15, 2020
- January 19, 2021
- February 9, 2021
- March 23, 2021

As part of the outreach process to County residents, the Planning Board created a survey to assist in gathering advice and guidance from residents about what opportunities and issues are their priority. The survey was distributed to residents via the internet and hard copies and was marketed via word of mouth, email addresses, and the County website. One hundred and forty (140) residents responded to the survey. Most of the respondents lived either in the City of Glasgow (64) or in the area surrounding the City (26).

Some of the more notable results of the survey showed the following:

- Respondents like the County's rural lifestyle, quality of life and safety.
- The top three issues of importance to respondents were: healthcare, economic development, and infrastructure (roads, etc.)
- Most respondents did not think there is adequate funding for all the needed services in the County.
- Some of the most important goals identified by respondents were to attract more jobs and businesses, better maintenance of roads, protect natural resources, better collaboration between the County and City and protecting private property rights.
- Most respondents (almost 60 percent) supported the County working to enhance tourism infrastructure.
- Most of the survey respondents (almost 55 percent) did not support the use of zoning regulations in the County.

The Planning Board held a formal public hearing on the draft Growth Policy at the Glasgow Senior Center on April 20, 2021. The Board discussed the draft plan and recommended that the draft Growth Policy be adopted by the County Commission contingent upon the edits and changes that they recommended at the meeting. The hearing was noticed in the Glasgow Courier. The public meeting/hearing was attended by the planning board and three commissioners. Only one resident from St. Marie attended.

The County Commission adopted the new Growth Policy on July \_\_\_\_\_, 2021.

# ACTION PLAN

Achieving the goals identified in this Growth Policy will take time and resources. Most important of all, it will require a commitment by residents, the County Planning Board, the County Commission, and a variety of partners to follow through on the guidance provided by the document. Many elements of implementation include meeting the statutory requirements for subdivision review, cooperation between the County and municipalities and the future review and update of this document in the future.

Economy	
Action	Responsibility
Work with Two Rivers Growth and Great Northern Development to identify economic incentives to maintain and attract businesses.	Two Rivers Growth, Great Northern Development, County Commission and Municipalities.
Develop an outreach plan to County businesses to regularly communicate with employers about their needs and concerns.	Two Rivers Growth, Great Northern Development, County Commission and Municipalities.
Develop a County-wide tourism strategy including marketing and funding.	Two Rivers Growth, Great Northern Development, County Commission, Municipalities and Montana Office of Tourism.
Develop a workforce training program.	Two Rivers Growth, Great Northern Development, County Commission, Municipalities, and educational institutions.
Aggressively educate County residents about the impacts of physical and mental health on county economy.	County Commission, Municipalities, Two Rivers Growth, and Great Northern Development.
Ensure that there is capable, robust, complete, and efficient healthcare presence which can be advertised as a real strength of the county and major determinant on quality of life. Good community healthcare is a source of well-paid jobs.	County Public Health, FMDH, Schools, EMCMHC, CARE Coalition, County Commission, VA Clinic, Municipalities, and Law Enforcement.
Develop a grant opportunity clearing house to inform County entities about grant opportunities and options.	Great Northern Development , Two Rivers Growth
Create the position of County Grant Writer.	County Commission
Organize a database of County alumni, contact them, and ask what incentives and opportunities might encourage them to bring their enterprise to the County.	Alumni Committees, Chamber of Commerce

Community Services	
Action	Responsibility
Develop a ‘volunteer services plan’ to assess the needs of volunteers, maintain volunteer number and to recruit and train volunteers.	County and Municipalities.
Develop a grant funding program to pursue applicable state and federal grants to supplement funding for services.	Two Rivers Growth, Great Northern Development, County Commission and Municipalities.
Pursue private and government grants to help plan and develop education, programs, and facilities that will improve mental and physical health of county residents.	County Commission, Municipalities, CARE Coalition, County Public Health, FMDH, EMCMHC, and Schools.

# ACTION PLAN

Community Services	
Action	Responsibility
Develop a nonprofit clearing house to list the County's nonprofits, identify their objectives, and work to facilitate cooperation and coordination among them and with the County.	Two Rivers Growth
Implement a program to appoint student members onto County Boards.	County Commission

Infrastructure	
Action	Responsibility
Use and annually update the new Capital Improvements Plan to prioritize and fund projects.	County Commission.
Use the Capital Improvements Plan to establish capital funds for each County Department for future needs.	County Commission.
Continue to pursue Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) to improve road access to the Fort Peck Cabin and Duck Creek areas.	County Commission.
Develop a grant application program to pursue applicable state and federal grants to supplement funding for infrastructure needs including those for unincorporated communities.	Two Rivers Growth, Great Northern Development, County Commission and Municipalities.

Land Use	
Action	Responsibility
Continue participation in the Montana Natural Resource Coalition.	County Commission.
Update the County Subdivision Regulations.	County Planning Board and County Commission.
Update the County Floodplain Regulations.	County Planning Board and County Commission.
Develop and adopt Buildings for Lease or Rent Regulations.	County Planning Board and County Commission.
Update Resource Use Plan.	Valley County Resource Use Plan Committee, County Commission, Planning Board.

Housing	
Action	Responsibility
Develop a housing assessment and plan for the County and its municipalities.	Two Rivers Growth, Great Northern Development, County Commission and Municipalities.
Pursue federal funding and support to mitigate the hazards at St. Marie, remove derelict buildings and provide clear property ownership titles.	County Commission, property owners, federal agencies, and Congressional Delegation.
Pursue public and private funding to plan, pilot, and develop regional CDC treatment and Recovery Transition facilities.	County Commission, Municipalities, CARE Coalition, County Public Health, FMDH, and EMCMHC (Eastern Montana Community Mental Health Center).

# ACTION PLAN

## SUBDIVISION REVIEW

The Subdivision and Platting Act requires that the County provide a statement in the Growth Policy explaining how they will:

- define the subdivision review criteria in 76-3-608 (3) (a) M.C.A.; and
- how the County will evaluate and make decisions on proposed subdivisions with respect to that criteria.

## DEFINITION OF 76-3-608 CRITERIA:

Valley County will use the definitions found in Appendix K of the current County's Subdivision Regulations to define the subdivision review criteria listed below.

- **Agriculture:** All aspects of farming or ranching including the cultivation or tilling of soil; dairying; the production, cultivation, growing, harvesting of agricultural or horticultural commodities; raising of livestock, bees, fur-bearing animals, or poultry; and any practices including, forestry or lumbering operations, including preparation for market or delivery to storage, to market, or to carriers for transportation to market.
- **Agricultural water user facilities:** Those facilities, which provide water for irrigation or stock watering to agricultural lands to produce agricultural products. These facilities include, but are not limited to, ditches, headgates, pipes, and other water conveying facilities.
- **Local services:** All services that local governments, public and private utilities are authorized to provide for the benefit of their citizens.
- **Natural Environment:** The physical conditions which exist within a given area, including land, air, water, mineral, flora, fauna, sound, light, and objects of historical and aesthetic significance.
- **Public health and safety:** The prevailing healthful, sanitary condition of well-being for the community at large. Conditions that relate to public health and safety include but are not limited to disease control and prevention; emergency services; environmental health; flooding, fire, or wildfire hazards, rockfalls or landslides, unstable soils, steep slopes, and other natural hazards; high voltage lines or high-pressure gas lines; and air or vehicular traffic safety hazards.
- **Wildlife:** Those animals that are not domesticated or tamed, or as may be defined in a Growth Policy.
- **Wildlife Habitat:** The place or area where wildlife naturally lives or travels through.

## EVALUATION OF SUBDIVISIONS BASED UPON 76-3-608 CRITERIA

Subdivision applications and subdivision review by the County Planning Board will include an analysis and documentation about how a proposed subdivision will impact agriculture, agricultural water user facilities, local services, the natural environment, wildlife, wildlife habitat, and public health and safety as defined in this Growth Policy.

The County will evaluate each proposed subdivision with regards to the expected impacts upon each criterion and the degree to which the subdivision applicant proposes to mitigate identified adverse impacts. The evaluation will be based upon the subdivision application, the County's review and information gathered from public hearings and other sources of information. Upon completion of its review and evaluation, the County will render a decision on a proposed subdivision with respect to the requirements of the County Subdivision Regulations, the County Growth Policy, and the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act.

# ACTION PLAN

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR EFFECTS ON AGRICULTURE

- a. How many, if any, acres of land will be removed from livestock or crop production? Is any portion of the lands taken out of production irrigated?

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR EFFECTS ON AGRICULTURAL WATER USER FACILITIES

- a. Will the subdivision interfere with any irrigation system or present any interference with agricultural operations in the vicinity?

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR EFFECTS UPON LOCAL SERVICES

- a. If the subdivision will use on-site water supply and sewage disposal, has Valley County and the Department of Environmental Quality approved the sanitation facilities?
- b. Which agencies will provide law enforcement, fire protection, and ambulance services?
- c. At an average of 8 vehicle trips per day per lot, how many average vehicle trips per day will the subdivision generate?
- d. At an average of 1.5 school-age children per lot, how many elementary and high school students will be added to the applicable schools?
- e. How much does the land affected by the proposed subdivision currently pay in local property taxes? After a subdivision is fully developed, how much will the land and improvements be expected to pay in local property taxes, at current mill levies?

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR EFFECT ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- a. Will the subdivision increase stormwater run-off, interfere with natural drainage-ways or cause, or increase erosion? Will the terrain create significant surface run-off problems? Will the grading and drainage plan minimize run-off and adverse impacts?
- b. Is the subdivision expected to adversely affect native vegetation, soils or the water quality or quantity of surface or ground waters? Will areas disturbed by cutting and filling and grading be reseeded in the same season to minimize erosion?
- c. Are weed control measures proposed to prevent the proliferation of weed growth within the subdivision and on areas disturbed by construction?
- d. Will the subdivision affect existing water rights? Will the subdivision deplete or otherwise affect groundwater?

# ACTION PLAN

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR EFFECT ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

- a. Is the subdivision subject to potential natural hazards such as flooding, snow or rockslides, high winds, wildfire or excessive slopes, or potential man-made hazards such as high voltage power lines, high-pressure gas lines, nearby industrial or mining activity, or high traffic volumes? If so, what measures has the subdivider proposed to minimize those hazards?

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR EFFECT ON WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

- a. Will the subdivision be in an area of significant wildlife habitat or in any critical wildlife areas? Will the expected effects of pets and human activity generated by the subdivision significantly affect wildlife?

## PUBLIC HEARING PROCEDURE

Under the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act, a local government must give notice and hold a public hearing on any major subdivision proposal that involves six or more lots. When the County Subdivision Regulations specify that the County Planning Board is responsible for holding the public hearing. The following steps outline the procedures that the Planning Board will use in conducting the public hearings on proposed subdivisions.

1. The Planning Board president opens the hearing and summarizes the proposal. The planning staff, (or consultant or an assigned planning board member) will present a report that provides background information and describes the key technical points of the application and the proposal's relationship to the growth policy plan, other plans, any land use regulations, and the draft Findings of Fact.
2. The subdivider or their representative may present information and testimony relating to the proposed subdivision. Planning Board members are permitted to direct any relevant questions to the staff or the applicant.
3. Any written comments submitted prior to the hearing will be read. If the president deems that the written comments are numerous or voluminous, he or she may request that the written comments be summarized.
4. Members of the audience will be given an opportunity to comment on the application or proposal. Comments should be factual and relevant to the proposal. A reasonable time will be allowed for each speaker. Each person speaking must give name, address, and nature of interest in the matter.
5. After public comment is complete, the subdivider or representative may respond briefly.
6. Planning Board members may voice other considerations and may pose any relevant questions through the president.
7. The president closes the hearing on the subdivision proposal.

It is important to note that hearings are not permitted under the statute for first minor subdivisions. Hearings may be permitted for subsequent minors if required by the County Subdivision Regulations.

# ACTION PLAN

## COORDINATION WITH COUNTY MUNICIPALITIES

State statute requires that the County identify how it will coordinate and cooperate with the municipalities located within the County's boundaries on matters related to the Growth Policy. Valley County will coordinate its implementation of this Growth Policy with the municipalities in the County by taking the following steps:

### *City of Glasgow*

The City of Glasgow addresses coordination with Valley County through the City Growth Policy for a one-mile planning radius around the City limits.

### *Town of Fort Peck*

Fort Peck has its own Growth Policy. Valley County will review any subdivisions or land use issues outside the City limits of Fort Peck. Much of the land surrounding the Town is owned by the Corps of Engineers.

### *Town of Nashua*

The Town of Nashua does not have a planning board.

### *Town of Opheim*

The Town of Opheim does not have a planning board.

## REVIEW AND REVISION OF THE GROWTH POLICY

The Growth Policy will be reviewed annually by the County Planning Board with a full update being completed as needed every five years. Revisions of the document can be made at any time by the Planning Board upon a request from the County Commissioners. The reasons for a revision could include events such as an increase in population due to a new industry project or a natural disaster such as a flood or wildfire.

# SOURCES OF INFORMATION

## *Introduction*

1. National Weather Service (2020)
2. Valley County staff and Planning Board
3. United State Census Bureau (2020)

## *Population Characteristics*

1. Headwaters Economics, Economic Profiling System, 2020
2. United States Census Bureau, 2020

## *Economy*

1. Headwaters Economics, Economic Profiling System, 2020
2. Great Northern Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (2017)

## *Local Services & Public Facilities*

1. Valley County staff and Planning Board
2. Montana Department of Transportation (2020)
3. Montana Department of Administration (2020)

4. Montana Office of Public Instruction (2020)

## *Housing*

1. American Community Survey, Census Bureau (2020)
2. Montana Department of Revenue (2020)

## *Land Use*

1. Valley County staff and Planning Board
2. Valley County Predisaster Mitigation Plan (2015)
3. Environmental Impact Statement-Keystone XL Project (2011)
4. Headwaters Economics, Economic Profiling System (2020)
5. Montana Board of Oil and Gas Conservation (2020)
6. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (2020)
7. Montana Department of Environmental Quality (2020)
8. Montana State Library (2020)





Water/Wastewater

Transportation

Grant Services

Solid Waste

Structural

Bridges

Natural Resources

Planning

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