# Stillwater County

## Montana

## Stillwater County Growth Policy

## 2007

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## March 2007

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

A Master Plan was approved for Stillwater County in 1997. The 1999 Montana Legislature changed state law authorizing growth policies rather than master plans or comprehensive plans. The 2003 Montana Legislature amended the law again to recognize existing master plans as valid growth policies until October 2006.

The County Planning Board was established in 1995 by the Stillwater County Commissioners and serves in an advisory capacity to the governing body. This Growth Policy has been prepared as part of the County Planning Board's responsibilities and on-going planning effort for the Stillwater County planning jurisdictional area.

This Stillwater County Growth Policy is intended to replace the 1997 Stillwater County Master Plan to comply with the new statutory requirements in Montana Code Annotated 76-1-601. Baseline information from the 1997 Master Plan was utilized and updated where more current information was available during the planning process.

A growth policy is not a regulatory document and does not confer any authority to regulate that is not otherwise specifically authorized by law or regulations adopted pursuant to the law. A governing body may not withhold, deny, or impose conditions on any land use approval or other authority to act based solely on compliance with an adopted growth policy.

After adoption of a growth policy, the governing bodies within the area covered by the growth policy are guided by and give consideration to the general policy and pattern of development set out in the growth policy in the authorization, construction, alteration, or abandonment of public ways, public places, public structures, or public utilities; authorization, acceptance, or construction of water mains, sewers, connections, facilities, or utilities; and adoption of zoning ordinances or resolutions.

Citizen participation is encouraged throughout the growth policy process and implementation of the growth policy. Information about the planning process was provided through a variety of methods including news releases, presentations to civic groups, resident surveys and open public meetings. A public hearing on the proposed plan was held as required. The plan will be presented to the Stillwater County Commissioners for formal adoption.

Community goals and objectives were reviewed in the process and revised to include additional guidance from the citizen participation process. Community goals and objectives are listed in Chapter 3. Implementation of this Growth Policy will be oriented to accomplish community development goals and objectives.

The County Planning Board recommended including the historical background of the area along with the required elements of a growth policy. The historical background information is in Chapter 4.

Existing characteristics and features of the county are described with maps and text. This inventory includes land use, population, housing needs, economic conditions, local services, public facilities and natural resources in Chapter 5. Maps of land ownership, parcel size, farmland classification, surface geology, general soils, elevation, topographic maps index, population maps, housing maps, school districts, fire districts, cemetery districts, taxable value, rivers and streams, water wells, road classifications, solid waste sites, recreation sites, and citizen initiated zoning districts are included.

Projected trends for the five to ten year life of the growth policy are provided for land use, population, housing needs, economic conditions, local services and natural resources in Chapter 6. Maps of future service areas and proposed capital improvement projects are also included in this chapter.

Implementation of the Growth Policy in Chapter 7 includes a description of policies, regulations, and implementation measures; a strategy for public infrastructure; an implementation strategy; a statement of coordination and cooperation between the town and county; a statement on subdivision criteria; and a statement on public hearings for subdivisions.

Minimum criteria defining the jurisdictional area of future neighborhood plans, information from the citizen participation process, and maps showing population and housing information on elementary districts recommended for future neighborhood plans are included in Chapter 8.

This growth policy is scheduled to be reviewed every five years and amended at least every ten years to keep it current and flexible enough to meet changing community needs.

# CHAPTER 2: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

## 2.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of citizen participation is to inform people of the planning process; solicit public input to identify issues, concerns, goals, objectives, and needs; clarify and rank goals; evaluate alternative solutions; set priorities; and provide additional opportunities for public comment in the decision making process and implementation of projects. A combination of techniques is suggested for citizen participation in the community planning process. Survey techniques include questionnaires, telephone surveys, interviews and media-based input. Public information techniques include open information meetings and public hearings. Open participatory techniques include community forums and meetings involving civic groups, community organizations and citizens in general. The representative process techniques include input from advisory boards, elected and appointed officials (Creighton, 1981).

## 2.2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

2.2.1 Results of previous citizen surveys were reviewed, summarized, and used to identify major issues and concerns.

2.2.2 Information about the planning process was provided through a variety of methods including news releases, published reports, and presentations to community organizations.

2.2.3 Public information meetings and open community forums were held in each community to clarify issues, concerns, goals, or objectives, and to rank goals and objectives.

2.2.4 Sections of the draft growth policy were presented at Planning Board meetings as they were developed. These meetings were open to the public and citizen participation was encouraged.

2.2.5 The growth policy was simplified as much as possible so that it is understandable to most citizens.

2.2.6 Draft copies of the growth policy were made available to all interested groups or individuals upon request for review and comments.

2.2.7 A public hearing on the plan was held as required (MCA 76-1-602). Public comments were evaluated and changes made as necessary.

2.2.8 The Growth Policy was presented to the County Commissioners. Their meetings are open to the public and are another opportunity for public participation.

2.2.9 Formal adoption of the Growth Policy is by resolution of the governing body. The governing body may submit the proposed plan to the qualified electors of the jurisdictional area. The qualified electors may also adopt, revise, or repeal a Growth Policy by initiative or referendum.

2.2.10 Citizens were informed of plan implementation and related projects through news releases, public notices, meetings, and/or hearings as needed.

2.2.11 Public comments will be reviewed before implementing recommended projects.

2.2.12 A formal action will be taken by the governing body before any project or recommendation is implemented.

## 2.3 SUMMARY OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION RESULTS

### 2.3.1 SUMMARY of 2002 STILLWATER COUNTY SURVEY

A Growth Policy Survey was prepared by the County Planning Office and mailed to approximately 4,000 mail customers in the county. About ten percent or 400 surveys countywide, including the Columbus planning jurisdictional area, were completed and returned. The results of that survey are summarized in Appendix A of this Growth Policy document.

The average age of the respondents was over 50 years of age. The average years of residence in the county were over 20 years. About 60% of respondents were male and 40% female. About 75% worked in the county and 25% worked outside the county in a variety of occupations.

The survey contained a variety of questions on natural and community features including open space, agriculture, wildlife, wilderness, mountains, rivers, affordable housing, knowing your neighbors, rural lifestyle, and sense of community. The average value for all features ranged from 4.4 to 5.3, on a 6 point scale with 6 being the highest rating. Open space, agriculture, mountains, rivers, and rural life had an average rating above 5 and wildlife, wilderness, affordable housing, knowing your neighbors, and sense of community had an average rating above 4 indicating a relatively high value is placed on all of these features.

Additional questions were asked about respondent's willingness to accept land use regulations to protect water quality, water quantity, promote economic development,

maintain agricultural production, protect wildlife habitat, and preserve open space, subdivision design, subdivision location, and no regulations at all. Only 17% of the respondents chose the no regulation option. Regulations to promote economic development also received less than a majority at 41%. The other items ranged from 55% for protecting wildlife habitat to 72% for water quality regulations. Water quantity, agriculture, open space, subdivision design, and subdivision location all received over 60% support. The survey results indicate respondents support regulation on all items listed except economic development.

Twenty one statements or questions on land use and other issues were included in the survey. Respondents to the survey could indicate, on a scale of 1 to 6, whether they strongly agreed (1) or strongly disagreed (6) with the statement or question. The averaged responses ranged from 1.7 (moderately strong agreement) to 4.7 (moderately strong disagreement) with the statements or questions. The responses to seven of the statements or questions scored a 2 or lower, indicating pretty strong agreement. Those areas of strongest agreement included the responses to the following questions or statements on land use: "Farms and ranches are a good way to preserve open space", "Loss of agricultural production is a problem", "New developments should not increase existing property taxes", "Subdivision activity should be regulated", "Stillwater County needs a Growth Policy", "Development should not be allowed in areas without adequate water supply", and "Development should not be allowed near the floodplain".

The area of strongest disagreement was to the statement "People should be able to subdivide where they want", which had an averaged response of 4.7. Looking at these responses indicates that people in Stillwater County pretty much agree that, in terms of land use, regulation of development, keeping open space, and having growth pay all of its costs are all desirable.

Questions on planning tools and actions asked respondents how acceptable eight different actions are on a scale of 1 to 6 with 1 being very acceptable to 6 being very unacceptable. The majority indicated acceptance of requiring developers to pay for roads and other infrastructure directly related to the development, requiring developers to demonstrate there are adequate facilities to serve the development, setting criteria that must be met in order to develop, and requiring developers to set aside land for schools and parks or pay fees. Moderate support was indicated for regulations for specific sensitive lands (floodplains, steep slopes, wildlife habitat, and hazard areas), development only within boundaries around towns, and zoning only in areas where landowners petition for land use regulation. Putting standards on development but no restrictions on land use was considered slightly unacceptable.

Questions on community services were also included in the survey for law enforcement, fire protection, ambulance, roads, bridges, senior services, schools, solid waste, and weed control. The average ratings ranges from 1.98 for senior services to 3.79 for roads on a 6 point scale with 1 being the highest rating. The survey results indicate there is average satisfaction with public services with some need for improvement in most services.

Other survey questions included respondents overall satisfaction rating of the county, willingness to pay for services and costs of development. The average satisfaction rating for the county was over 6.6 on a 10 point scale. Individual communities within the county ranged from average satisfaction ratings from 5.5 to 8.1, indicating general satisfaction in all communities within the county. Over 57% of the respondents indicated a willingness to pay more for improved services. Over 90% thought new development should pay for itself and not increase taxes.

Growth Policy forums were also held in eight communities around the county between April 30, 2002 and May 23, 2002. Comments, concerns, and goals were listed during these meetings. Results from the Growth Policy forums were compiled to display each community's concerns and goals. Eight countywide issues were identified from the forums. These include encourage economic variety and development, establish subdivision impact fees, protect agriculture right to farm, protect property rights, update infrastructure and public services, address subdivision design and location issues, establish stream bank setbacks, and improve and monitor water quality.

## 2.3.2 SUMMARY of 1996 CITIZEN PARTICIPATION RESULTS

Results from previous resident surveys noted above were used to identify major categories for issues and concerns. The categories identified included roads/bridges, solid waste/recycling, mining impact/rapid growth, subdivisions, mobile homes/trailers, town sites/infrastructure, economic development, law enforcement/emergency services and zoning. Another category for “other issues and concerns” was added to the list.

Invitations to participate in the planning process were distributed at each polling place in the county during the June 4, 1996 primary election, through publication in the Stillwater County News, and distribution upon request. Two hundred seventeen concerns were identified from the comments received on invitation forms returned to the County Planning Board.

Community meetings were then held in each of the nine elementary school districts in the county. Participants discussed their concerns on each major issue and indicated relative agreement or disagreement with each concern listed during these meetings. Results from the community meetings were compiled on a spreadsheet to display each community's response to issues of concern to them. Twenty eight countywide planning issues were identified from the community meetings.

The County Planning Board decided to ask the county electorate to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with each of the twenty eight planning issues at each polling place in the county during the November 5, 1996 general election.

Over 95% of the respondents on the road and bridge issues agreed a road & bridge plan was needed along with an annual work plan to implement specific projects. The majority did not support local option taxes or special improvement districts to finance road and

bridge work. Over 90% supported improvements in right-of-way records and acquisition as needed.
Over 88% of the respondents on the solid waste and recycling issues supported integrated solid waste management and encouraged private enterprise participation in water supply, septic tank service and other solid waste/recycling services. Almost 97% agreed residents should be informed of solid waste management practices and provided a list of acceptable materials.

Over 96% of the respondents on mine impact and rapid growth issues agreed the county should monitor mine impacts and keep communications open with the mine. Over 86% agreed impacts from population growth should be projected and included in county plans.

Over 84% of the respondents on subdivision issues agreed subdivisions are necessary to meet housing needs and a strategy for affordable housing needs to be addressed. Almost 92% agreed subdivision design and improvement standards need to be kept high, avoid natural disasters, consider impacts on community facilities and services, and be accountable for impacts. A majority of 56% agreed clustered housing in rural subdivisions should be encouraged. Over 80% agreed taxpayers do not want to subsidize subdivisions and regulations / impact fees should be imposed fairly.

Over 76% of the respondents on mobile home issues agreed minimum standards for mobile homes should be set and the majority agreed older mobile homes should be restricted to mobile home parks.

Over 90% of the respondents on town site and public facility issues agreed unincorporated town sites need plans for street repairs, storm drainage, water systems, sewer systems, sidewalks and community parks. Also, each community should be responsible for their own public facility by forming water and sewer districts or other special improvement districts with the users paying for services received.

Over 97% of the respondents on economic development issues agreed road improvements and other infrastructure need to be improved to support economic development. A majority also agreed economic incentives for agricultural lands, new and expanding business should be developed. Almost 75% agreed deteriorated properties should not be allowed to detract from economic development.

Over 94% of the respondents on law enforcement and emergency services issues agreed there was a need for additional support for volunteer fire departments and ambulance services, promoting policies to minimize health and safety hazards, completing and maintaining rural addressing county wide, encouraging neighborhood watch groups to support law enforcement, and maximizing community services work alternatives to reduce the need for jail space.

Over 83% of the respondents on zoning issues agreed the county should only create separate planning and zoning districts when petitioned by 60% or more of the affected freeholders. Also alternatives to county zoning such as voluntary conservation easements

and development permit systems should be emphasized to protect the value of property rather than strict zoning districts.

Over 95% of the respondents on other issues agreed policies should be developed to provide opportunities for public comment on capital improvement projects. Also, the county should be active in the legislative process and intergovernmental relations among federal, state and local government; and community forums available for citizens to express ideas and concerns.

# CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY GOALS and OBJECTIVES

## 3.1. OVERALL GOAL

To improve the public health, safety, and general welfare of the community by planning for future development, so that adequate public facilities and services are provided; the needs of agriculture, business, and industry are recognized; residential subdivisions are developed in an orderly manner to coordinate roads, storm drainage, water and sewer systems, solid waste facilities, utilities, emergency services, and parkland; and to promote the efficient and economical use of public funds.

## 3.2. OVERALL OBJECTIVES

3.2.1. Encourage economic development and diversification.

3.2.2. Establish impact fees for new development.

3.2.3. Clarify impacts to agriculture when revising the subdivision regulations to include the "Right to Farm" concept.

3.2.4. Balance individual property rights with the rights of other property owners and community interests for the public health, safety, and welfare of all citizens.

3.2.5. Improve infrastructure and public services to accommodate future growth through capital improvement plans and implementation strategies.

3.2.6. Update design standards in subdivision regulations.

3.2.7. In order to maintain public health, monitor and improve groundwater quality through septic system and well standards.

3.2.8. To the extent legally possible the County should protect the quality and quantity of both surface and ground water and work with State and Federal agencies to assure that water quality regulations of those agencies are enforced.

3.2.9. Support the collection and analysis of groundwater data in Stillwater County for use in evaluating subdivision development and impact.

## 3.3. LAW ENFORCEMENT and EMERGENCY SERVICES ISSUES

### 3.3.1. GOALS

3.3.1.1. Provide additional support for emergency response coordination, local emergency planning committee, volunteer fire departments and ambulance services, and promote policies to minimize health and safety hazards.

3.3.1.2. Continue working on implementation of Emergency Response Plan, disaster planning, E 911 system, rural addressing system County wide.

3.3.1.3. Encourage neighborhood or community watch groups to support law enforcement.

3.3.1.4. Utilize Yellowstone County Detention Facility, community service work alternatives, and state-of-the-art criminal justice technology and data bases.

### 3.3.2. OBJECTIVES

3.3.2.1. Support existing ambulance services, fire districts, and volunteer fire departments by providing information on grant sources, surplus equipment, and organizations available to assist.

3.3.2.2. Encourage continued use of mutual aid agreements among emergency service providers wherever practical.

3.3.2.3. Keep emergency operation plans updated as needed and include revised Mystic Dam emergency action plan inundation maps.

3.3.2.4. Provide training and equipment to maintain emergency plans, implementation, and response.

3.3.2.5. Coordinate development of rural addressing with 9-1-1 emergency communication system for dispatching law enforcement, fire, ambulance, and other emergency or disaster services.

3.3.2.6. Refer community leaders interested in forming neighborhood or community watch groups to the Billings Crime Council for information.

3.3.2.7. Evaluate existing law enforcement facilities and future facility needs.

3.3.2.8. Complete search and rescue facility and site work.

3.3.2.9. Support County wide fire district.

## 3.4. COUNTY ROADS and BRIDGE ISSUES

### 3.4.1. GOALS

3.4.1.1. Provide the safest and most cost effective surface transportation system possible to the taxpayers and traveling public.

3.4.1.2. Participate in capital improvement plans to prioritize County road and bridge work, identify material sources, right-of-way needs, load limits, maintenance methods, funding sources, and other road and bridge issues along with operations plans to implement specific projects, upgrade equipment and facilities, and automate records as needed.

### 3.4.2. OBJECTIVES

3.4.2.1. Continue ongoing review, updating, and documentation of functional classifications for the transportation system within the County by identifying arterial routes, major and minor collectors, local roads, and bus routes for maintenance and reconstruction priorities. Review, update, and document minimum design standards for County roads including right-of-way width, travel lane width, grades, stopping distance, curvature, and bridge standards.

3.4.2.2. Evaluate all road and bridge infrastructure to comply with Government Accounting Standards Board Order #34 (GASB-34) and prepare site plans for future facility needs at County shops, Fishtail, Molt, Rapelje, Reed Point, and Park City.

3.4.2.3. Utilize Federal, State, local, and private resources available for road and bridge projects and upgrade equipment to the greatest extent possible as provided for in the Surface Transportation Program, Secondary Road Program, Forest Highway Program, Gas Tax, Off System Bridge Program, mine impact funds, local tax, non-tax revenues, Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP), and Treasure State Endowment Program (TSEP) grant funds and other available funding sources.

3.4.2.4. Coordinate road and bridge work with priorities established through State and County transportation planning and three-year operating plans. Special emphasis will be placed on reconstruction of Highway 78 (Columbus-Absarokee Road) and replacement of bridges. Work to assure that areas disturbed by road construction are reclaimed so as to maintain the natural character of the area when possible.

3.4.2.5. Utilize private contractors for road materials to the greatest extent possible to identify existing and potential sources of gravel suitable for use as road

materials and comply with the permitting and reclamation requirements of the Open Cut Mining Act.

3.4.2.6. Update road and bridge geographic information system (GIS) files incorporating most current information.

3.4.2.7. Improve right-of-way records documentation, and continued conversion to digital format for computer applications and use.

# SOLID WASTE and RECYCLING ISSUES

## 3.4.3. GOALS

3.4.3.1. Provide refuse collection service to district members in the most economical and practical manner possible.

3.4.3.2. Provide solid waste collection and transfer services utilizing seven staffed sites and two non-staffed sites.

3.4.3.3. Encourage integrated solid waste management to implement cost effective source reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting prior to disposal.

## 3.4.4. OBJECTIVES

3.4.4.1. Provide a centralized collection area in each community within the Solid Waste District. Continue to operate and maintain collection sites in each area of the County along with a centrally located transfer station.

3.4.4.2. Provide for disposal of solid waste with Class II and Class III household waste transported to the Billings landfill for disposal when reuse or recycle is not feasible.

3.4.4.3. Establish a fair and equitable fee structure to cover operation and maintenance of the system, and debt service obligations, and provide for a restricted cash fund to replace equipment as needed. The Solid Waste District will set fees annually in the budget process.

3.4.4.4. Recommend adoption of a policy on special service requests for district members and provide for equitable treatment of non-district users. Fees for this service should be based on the cost of providing the service.

3.4.4.5. The Solid Waste District will evaluate purchase of land for the existing collection sites whenever possible rather than lease property.

3.4.4.6. The Solid Waste District will continue to encourage County residents to actively participate in reuse programs such as swap programs, yard sales, and second hand and thrift stores and provide some recycling opportunities with drop-off boxes available at staffed sites.

3.4.4.7. Inform residents of current solid waste management practices and provide a list of acceptable materials. Distribute informational brochures, posters, and articles on the solid waste system and recommended practices to identify and reduce the amount of hazardous, ignitable, corrosive, reactive, or toxic waste going into the solid waste collection system, dispose of hazardous waste in approved treatment storage and disposal facilities available through the Department of Environmental Quality, Solid Waste Department, or Beartooth RC&D.

## 3.5. SUBDIVISION ISSUES

### 3.5.1. *GOALS*

3.5.1.1. Recognize land subdivision is necessary to meet housing needs, and develop a strategy for adequate and affordable housing required for an increasing population.

3.5.1.2. Update subdivision regulations to be compliant with the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act and the Stillwater County Growth Policy.

3.5.1.3. Encourage a policy of utilizing mitigation measures to minimize impacts of subdivision development.

3.5.1.4. Develop policies to ensure taxpayers do not subsidize subdivision improvements and that regulations and subdivision impact fees are imposed fairly.

### 3.5.2. *OBJECTIVES*

3.5.2.1. Address housing needs in updates to the Growth Policy--and any neighborhood plans--to encourage a diversity of housing types and to assure affordable and decent housing opportunities for citizens of all income levels.

3.5.2.2. Continue subdivision review process as required by State law.

3.5.2.3. Include school projections in community plans.

3.5.2.4. Institute a system of impact assessment and reasonable fees or mitigation by subdividers. Require subdividers to pay or guarantee payment for proportionate share of the costs of extending capital facilities to a subdivision. This includes all costs of the improvements within the subdivision and a proportionate share of the costs of extending public roads, sewer lines, water supply lines, and storm drains to a subdivision.

3.5.2.5. Encourage clustered housing designs in subdivisions as provided in State statutes.

3.5.2.6. Update subdivision regulations to ensure developments will meet the goals and objectives of this Growth Policy and neighborhood plans, if any.

3.5.2.7. Suggest retention of agricultural land and open spaces.

3.5.2.8. Provide information regarding right to farm and methods of retaining agricultural land.

3.5.2.9. Consider how rural subdivisions contribute to public costs, compared to agricultural use, and mitigate the public costs to the greatest extent possible provided by law.

3.5.2.10. Update subdivision regulations to clarify procedures and include design standards appropriate for urban, rural, and unincorporated towns.

3.5.2.11. Provide information about public costs of rural development in small towns and rural areas. Within the subdivision regulations encourage high density subdivisions (lots 1 acre or less) to locate in or adjacent to existing communities to reduce net public facilities costs and minimize the impact to agricultural lands.

## 3.6. AFFORDABLE HOUSING and MANUFACTURED HOMES ISSUES

### 3.6.1. GOALS

3.6.1.1. Utilize State and Federal standards for mobile homes/trailers by type, class, and size to address concerns about safety and fire hazards.

3.6.1.2. Develop procedures to address older mobile homes in licensed mobile home parks consistent with Federal and State law.

### 3.6.2. OBJECTIVES

3.6.2.1. Use standards already in place from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development or State to provide a clear definition of manufactured homes (76-2-202, MCA) and mobile homes and trailer houses (MCA 61-1-501 and 61-4-309) consistent with statutory language.

3.6.2.2. Develop a Conditional Use Permit system for manufactured homes throughout the County, excluding areas zoned by Columbus.

3.6.2.3. Include guidelines for the development, improvement, and extension of areas for use as trailer courts and sites for mobile homes in the subdivision regulations.

## 3.7. LAND USE CONFLICTS AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATION ISSUES

### 3.7.1. GOALS

3.7.1.1. Only create separate planning and zoning districts when petitioned by 60% or more of the affected freeholders in compliance with 76-2-101 through 76-2-112, MCA.

3.7.1.2. Suggest development permit systems to minimize the affect on individual property rights.

### 3.7.2. OBJECTIVES

3.7.2.1. Provide information on the process to create separate planning and zoning districts when petitioned by 60% or more of the affected freeholders. Research the legal authority to regulate natural resource development by way of these type of planning and zoning districts

3.7.2.2. Note water rights status on final plats.

3.7.2.3. Prepare a draft development permit system for further discussion and consideration.

3.7.2.4. Draft off-premise sign regulations.

3.7.2.5. Draft wind conversion systems and cell tower regulations.

# 3.8. TOWNSITES and PUBLIC FACILITIES ISSUES

## 3.8.1. GOALS

3.8.1.1. Prepare neighborhood plans for street repairs, storm drainage, water systems, sewer systems, sidewalks, community parks for unincorporated town sites of Absarokee, Dean, Fishtail, Molt, Nye, Park City, Rapelje, and Reed Point. Include specific issues identified for each community.

3.8.1.2. Establish water and sewer districts or other special improvement districts to allow each community to be responsible for their own public facilities with the users paying for services received.

## 3.8.2. OBJECTIVES

3.8.2.1. Provide assistance from the Planning Office for the preparation of community plans for each unincorporated town-site. Include community needs for each unincorporated town in the County capital improvements plan/program for street repairs, storm drainage, water systems, sewer systems, sidewalks, and community parks based on need, priorities, and funding availability.

3.8.2.2. Assist communities in providing solutions to deficiencies in public facilities which detract from community development and are potentially detrimental to public health and safety. Information on grant sources and other funding alternatives for capital improvements is available through the Planning Office.

3.8.2.3. Assist communities interested in forming water and sewer districts or other special improvements districts. Information on assistance available from State and Federal Agencies, Beartooth RC&D, Midwest Assistance Program, or other nonprofit organizations will be provided as available.

3.8.2.4. Project impacts from population growth in the County Growth Policy, and prepare neighborhood plans based on elementary school district boundaries.

# 3.9. MINING AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS AND MANAGED GROWTH ISSUES

## 3.9.1. GOALS

3.9.1.1. Monitor mine impacts, keep communications open with the mine, and stay involved with mine-related legislative issues.

3.9.1.2. Identify the appropriate entity(ies) having authority to deal with the responsible development of any natural resource proposed for development within the County, and monitor any such development to ensure that negative impacts are minimized.

## 3.9.2. OBJECTIVES

3.9.2.1. Implement approved impact plans as required and continue to provide public facilities and services as agreed upon in the plan by each affected unit of local government.

3.9.2.2. Monitor levels of employment of large-scale mineral developments annually to identify the total number of employees, total persons, level of in-migrating employment, and students by high school and elementary school districts. Compare actual impacts with projections from the approved impact plan.

3.9.2.3. Negotiate and amend hard rock mining economic impact plans if employment at the large scale mineral development projects changes by at least 75 people, conditions of impact plan amendment is met or, the County and mineral developer join in a petition to amend the impact plan.

3.9.2.4. Maintain the Hard Rock Mine Trust and Tax accounts from the State allocation of Metal Mines License Tax. The Hard Rock Mine Trust account is invested and will only be expended following the mine's closure or a 50% reduction in mine work force. The Metal Mine Tax Reserve Account is divided equally among the County, affected high school districts, and affected elementary school districts annually.

3.9.2.5. Follow up as necessary to ensure that the appropriate entity(ies) having authority to deal with natural resource development are addressing such development and monitor the impacts of such development.

3.9.2.6. Keep current census information in the Planning Office and include projections of population growth in the growth policy each census tract within the County.

3.9.2.7. Assist with the preparation of community plans for each unincorporated town-site. Include growth strategies to facilitate community development at rates and cost considered desirable and acceptable to the citizens of the areas affected by growth.

## 3.10. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

### 3.10.1. GOALS

3.10.1.1. Community infrastructure needs to be improved to support economic development. The cost and benefits of each project should be considered before a final decision is made.

3.10.1.2. Deteriorated properties should not be allowed to detract from economic development.

### 3.10.2. OBJECTIVES

3.10.2.1. Participate in updates of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of the Beartooth R, C&D Economic Development District to include infrastructure, economic development, communication, services, and natural resources projects needed to support economic development in Stillwater County.

3.10.2.2. Coordinate economic development programs and activities of Stillwater County Economic Development Committee, Greater Stillwater County Chamber of Commerce, Beartooth Economic Development District, Big Sky Economic Development Authority; Montana Department of Commerce, and the U.S. Economic Development Administration to avoid any unnecessary duplication.

3.10.2.3. Request the County Economic Development Coordinator coordinate research on available economic incentives for agricultural lands and new or existing business with assistance from the Beartooth RC&D.

3.10.2.4. Support the efforts of community and business groups to promote commercial activity and increase tourism by providing promotional maps and assisting with information required for Certified Communities Program.

3.10.2.5. Notify the Health Board of complaints received on deteriorated properties and encourage the Health Board to seek legal advice from the County Attorney as to how to address deteriorated property issues.

## 3.11. OTHER COUNTY ISSUES

### 3.11.1. GOALS

3.11.1.1. Develop policies to provide a planning and review process for County capital improvement projects. Include opportunities for public comment on alternatives, cost, and design from each community potentially affected.

3.11.1.2. The County should be active in the legislative process and intergovernmental relations among Federal, State, and local government.

3.11.1.3. Provide opportunities for community forums for citizens to express ideas and concerns.

### 3.11.2. OBJECTIVES

3.11.2.1. Develop a procedure for County departments to request capital expenditures greater than $5,000 during the budget process and formally adopt a capital improvement program to comply with 7-6-2219, MCA.

3.11.2.2. Adopt a County policy for a County capital improvements program which includes procedures for public involvement, and an evaluation of alternatives, cost estimates, and design.

3.11.2.3. Review legislative proposals, evaluate effects on the County government and its citizens, testify at committee hearings or send comments to representatives or committee members indicating position and reasons through open public process.

3.11.2.4. Request planning information and project or program documents from Federal and State agencies, be made available for public use through the County Library.

3.11.2.5. Encourage cooperation among Federal, State, and local governments on intergovernmental decisions or actions.

3.11.2.6. Request written memorandum of understanding with Federal and/or State agencies if needed to coordinate plans or projects affecting the County.

# CHAPTER 4: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

## 4.1. Early History

The county's earliest residents were Crow Indians. Southern Stillwater County was part of the Crow Indian Reservation from 1851 to 1892. Crow Agency was formerly located less than two miles south of the present town site of Absarokee. The first recorded appearance of white explorers was in 1806 when Captain Clark, of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, separated from his party in Three Forks and traveled east down the Yellowstone River. Trappers and traders, such as Manuel Lisa, Jim Bridger and Isborne Russell also traveled through this area in the 1800's. With the beginning of trading in the area, famous trails such as the Bridger and Bozeman Trails and Bozeman - Miles City Stagecoach Road crossed through the county.

Stillwater County has a rich mining history. There has been exploration and mining activity in its southern portion of the county since 1870. Most of the mining centered around the upper Stillwater Valley, above Nye, in a highly mineralized area, 28 miles long and 3 miles wide, named the Stillwater Complex. Nye City was built in the 1880's as the base for a gold mining operation in the area. During this decade the town boomed to a population of 500, but by 1890, Nye City was virtually a ghost town.

By 1883, the Northern Pacific had extended their railroad line along the lower Yellowstone Valley. As the railroads were constructed, access became easier. The railroad companies, to increase their business, actively promoted settling in the west along its lines where land was available. The railroads had received 40 alternate sections of public land for each mile of road built within the territories, thus they could raise capital by promoting settlement and selling land. Settlers from the east came by the thousands to farm what they were told was land with unlimited fertility. In 1918, the Northern Pacific built a railroad spur through the northern part of the county into the Lake Basin, terminating and creating the town of Rapelje.

## 4.2. Homesteading

Prior to the 1890's, some cattle grazing occurred in this area. With the passage of the Homestead Act, the prospect of free land and independence added a great incentive for people to settle lands in the west. It was possible to acquire 160 acres by living on the land and working it for five years. Most of the valleys and irrigated lands were thus settled. People homesteaded in the Stillwater County area between 1892 and 1913. The passage of the Carey Land Act in 1902 made it possible for individuals to obtain 320 acres by living on it seven months each year for three years. This act spurred additional people from the east to settle in the west. Many were the honyonkers, or dryland farmers. Between 1900 and 1920 over 1300 farms, mostly dryland, comprising nearly 670,000 acres were established in Stillwater County.

## 4.3 Irrigation Ditches

Numerous large irrigation projects were also started in the region at the same time railroad access and homestead land became available. The Big Ditch, Butcher Creek and Rosebud Ditch, Yellowstone Ditch, Flaherety Ditch, Garrigus Ditch, Gilbert and Tunnel Ditch, Italian Ditch, Mendenhall Ditch, Merrill Ditch, Old Mill Ditch, Phelps Ditch, Reed Point Ditch, and Shane Ditch were all constructed between 1882 and 1898. The Columbus Irrigation Project, Cove Ditch, and Kem-Mulherin Ditch were developed later between 1906 and 1914.

## 4.4. Stillwater County formed in 1913

Stillwater County was formed from parts of Yellowstone, Carbon and Sweet Grass Counties, by petition and election in 1913. The name of the county was taken from the Stillwater River. It was organized with the Town of Columbus as the county seat. The county boundaries were later changed in 1915 when 84 square miles in the northeastern part were added to Sweet Grass and four townships in southeastern Sweet Grass County were given to Stillwater County. Town sites were platted as people moved into this area. Park City was platted in 1884 and Columbus (formerly Stillwater) in 1891 for the Northern Pacific Railroad. Absarokee was originally platted in 1905 and Reed Point was platted in 1911. Fishtail was platted in 1913; Molt, Rapelje and Springtime were all platted in 1917; Nora was platted in 1918 and later expanded with the Wheat Basin plat in 1919. Beehive, Dean and Nye are better described as a composite of various surveys rather than platted town sites. There were 22 post-offices in the history of the county, but only eight are active post-offices today.

A sandstone quarry operated north of Columbus between 1890 and 1910. During its peak period, the quarry employed 72 miners and masons. Many local buildings are constructed of the course-grained sandstone as well as a wing of the State Capitol Building in Helena, the federal buildings in Butte and Helena, the original federal building in Billings, hotels in Forsyth and Havre, the Missoula and Havre high schools, and the Masonic Temple in Missoula. The quarry craftsman also supplied elaborate cemetery monuments and headstones to 40 Montana cemeteries including Columbus cemetery. Since 1910, there has been no further activity at the quarry, although the Petosa Monument Co. worked sandstone pieces for 30 years after the quarry closed.

## 4.5. Depression Era

The great depression began to affect this area in 1919, as several years of drought occurred, devastating crops and bankrupting many farmers. Many gave up and left the area, while their land was bought by larger landowners. The population in the northern part of the county declined and is only a fraction of what it had been in the homesteading years. The rate of decline in population slowed down by 1940. After the drought, farmers

and ranchers began to diversify. In addition to grazing cattle, they raised wheat, hay, oats, barley and sugar beets.

## 4.6. Mineral Development

Interest in the Stillwater Complex began in earnest around 1917 in response to the demand for chrome during World War I. Production did not start until 1941 and was terminated by 1943. The Anaconda Company, as agent for the Defense Plant Corporation of the Federal government began production of ore at the Benbow, Mountain View, and Gish properties. A mining town was built at Lake Camp above Horseman Flat to house miners. Production from the mine declined when the war ended and chrome was no longer economical to mine. The new mining town was later abandoned. Another war-induced shortage of chrome during the early 1950's resulted in the reopening of the Mouat Mine. In 1952 American Chrome Company contracted with the Federal government to stockpile chromite at Nye. Over 900,000 tons of concentrate, averaging 38.5 percent $Cr_2O_3$, was mined from the Mouat mine between 1953 and 1961. Chrome production ended in 1961 and a stockpile of ore was left near the mine. The most recent exploration activity in the Stillwater Complex began in the 1967 for platinum and associated metal potential. Platinum and palladium mineralization was first discovered by Johns Manville Corporation in the early 1970s. The rising price of platinum group metals resulted in development of the Stillwater Mine in 1985. Stillwater Mining Company is currently operating the only platinum/palladium mine in the United States.

## 4.7. Schools and Special districts

Development efforts have continued around the county with the formation of school, fire, sewer, solid waste, light districts, cemetery districts and other community facilities/services since 1893. There are eight elementary school districts in the county serving Absarokee, Columbus, Fishtail, Molt, Nye, Rapelje, Reed Point and Park City. There are also five high school districts serving Absarokee, Columbus, Rapelje, Reed Point and Park City and a portion of the Broadview High School district in Stillwater County. Sewer Systems were built in Absarokee in 1950, Park City in 1968 and Reed Point in 1995. Private water user associations serve Absarokee since 1953 and Rapelje since 1962. Absarokee Fire District was formed in 1954, Park City Fire District in 1956, Broadview Fire District in 1967 and the Columbus Rural Fire District in 1990, Rapelje, Molt, Nye and Reed Point also have volunteer fire departments. Street light districts were created for Reed Point in 1919, Park City in 1953 and Absarokee in 1960. Cemetery districts were created for Park City in 1951, Rapelje in 1956 and the Rosebud Cemetery District for Absarokee in 1956. The County Solid Waste District was formed in 1975 and later revised collection and disposal methods in 1994 to comply with changing federal and state laws.

## 4.8 Development of Transportation System

The transportation system in the county began as overland trails and has been developed over time into the present road system. The Stillwater Road was initially developed in 1893, and then rebuilt in 1915 and 1935 from Columbus to Absarokee. Reconstruction began on the section through Fishtail to Nye in 1994. U. S. Highway 10 replaced the Bozeman - Miles City Stagecoach Road and was rebuilt in 1931. Interstate 90 was constructed through the county during 1968 to 1971 time period. Most of the existing county roads were petitioned, surveyed and declared public roads between from 1882 and 1920.

## 4.9. Utilities

Electrical and telephone service was established in the county in the early 1900's and a gas distribution system was constructed in the 1930's. Construction of the Mystic Lake dam and power plant was completed in 1925. Cable television lines were installed in the early 1970's and fiber optic cables were installed in the late 1980's and early 1990's.

## 4.10. Planning

A city-county planning board was formed in 1967 and a county planning board was formed in 1995. A comprehensive area plan was adopted in 1970, a Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan was approved in 1985 and amended in 1988, an Overall Economic Development Plan was adopted in 1989, and a Road and Bridge Plan was prepared in 1990. Subdivision activity in the county was extensive in the 1970's and has continued through the 1990's. Subdivision regulations were initially adopted in 1970 and have been amended as recently as 1995. Flood plain maps and regulations were prepared in 1975 and revised in 1984. One citizen petitioned planning and zoning district was established in 1979 for an area in the West Fork of the Stillwater drainage.

## 4.11. Summary

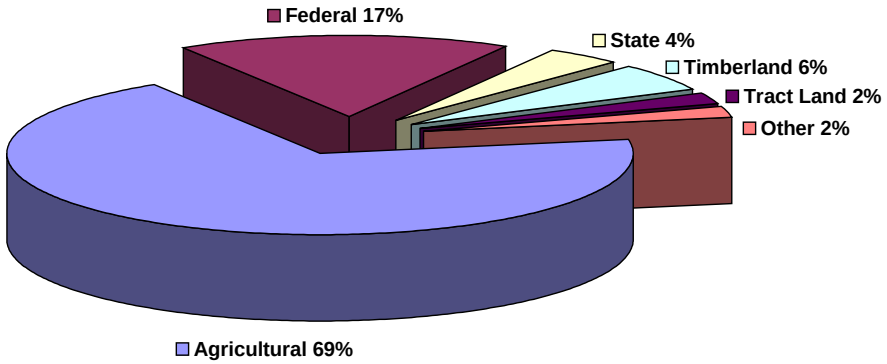
The history of mining, ranching, farming, development of town sites with community facilities and services, and more recently recreational development in the county are evident in the 1990's. This diversity provides the socio-economic base of Stillwater County and will likely continue to influence the culture of the area for years to come.

# CHAPTER 5: EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS & FEATURES

## 5.1 LAND USES

There is a diversity of land ownership and use in Stillwater County. Approximately 79% of land in the County is in private ownership and the remaining 21% is publicly owned. Approximately 69% of the land area within the county has been classified agricultural and another 6% has been classified as private timberland. Federal lands include 17% of the land area within the county and state owned lands account for another 4%. The remaining 4% of the land area includes tract land, commercial tracts, town sites, exempt properties and other unclassified lands. The land ownership map shows the location of general ownership and conservation easements.

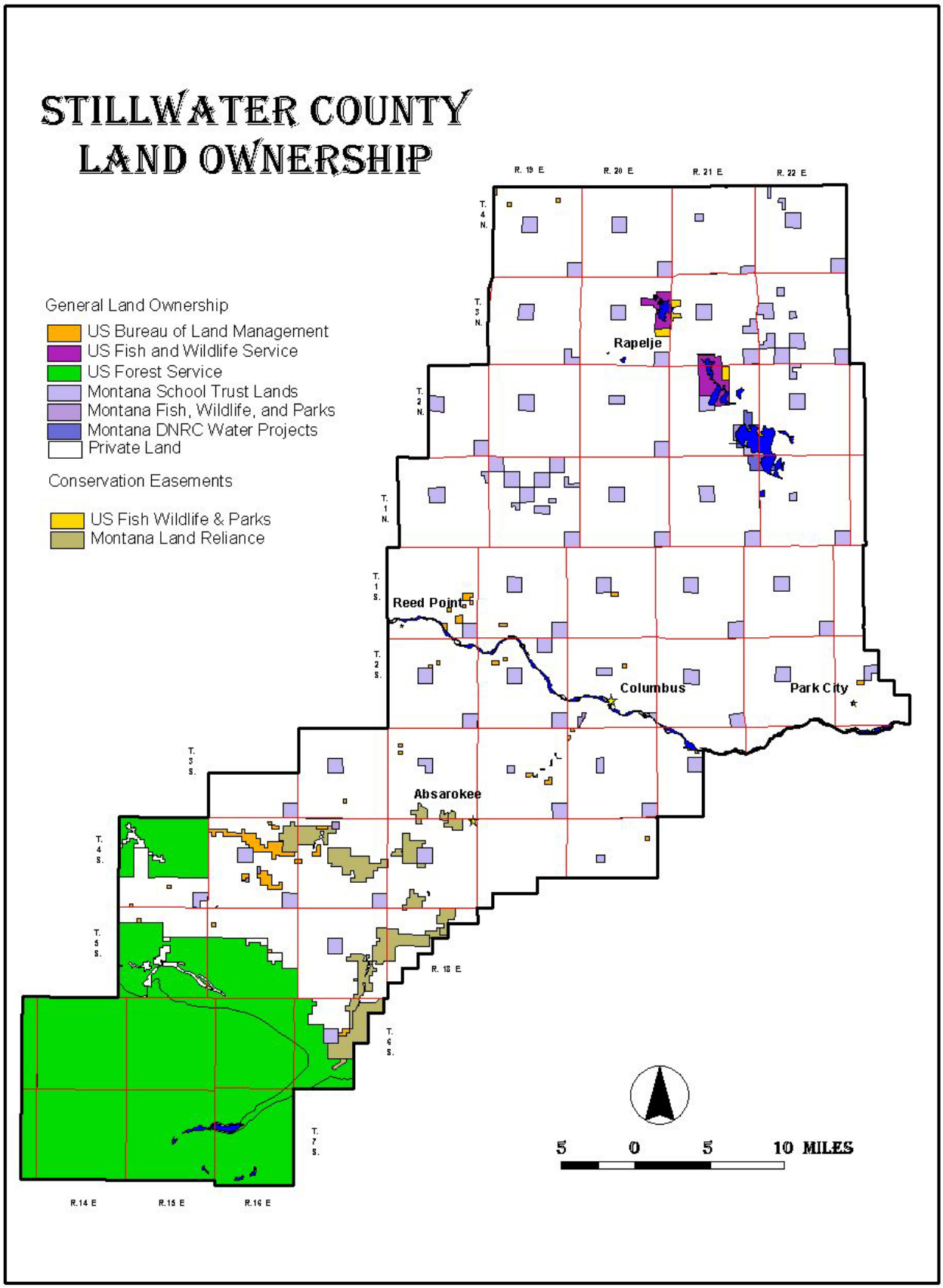
**Land Classification**




*(Source: MT Department of Revenue)*

### 5.1.1. LAND CLASSIFICATION

Stillwater County has a total area of 1,804.61 square miles with 1,795.09 square miles of land and 9.52 square miles of water area. Approximately 69% of the county is classified agricultural including grazing, non-irrigated, irrigated, and wild hay. Federal lands cover about 17 % of the county and state lands another 4 %. Private timberlands are almost 6 % of the county. Tract land covers over 2 % of the county and includes tracts less than twenty acres and twenty to sixty acre tracts. Other land including city and town lots, tax exempt properties, commercial tracts, industrial property and other unclassified land comprise about 2 % of the county.


STILLWATER COUNTY
LAND OWNERSHIP
General Land Ownership
US Bureau of Land Management
US Fish and Wildlife Service
US Forest Service
Montana School Trust Lands
Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
Montana DNRC Water Projects
Private Land
Conservation Easements
US Fish Wildlife & Parks
Montana Land Reliance
R. 19 E
R. 20 E
R. 21 E
R. 22 E
T. 4 N.
T. 3 N.
T. 2 N.
T. 1 N.
T. 1 S.
T. 2 S.
T. 3 S.
T. 4 S.
T. 5 S.
T. 6 S.
T. 7 S.
R. 13 E
R.14 E
R.15 E
R.16 E
Rapelje
Reed Point
Columbus
Park City
Absarokee
5 0 5 10 MILES

### 5.1.1.1. AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Less than 20,000 acres of agricultural lands have been classified as irrigated. The irrigated lands are primarily located in the Fishtail Creek, Rosebud Creek, Stillwater and Yellowstone River valleys. Over 148,000 acres have been classified as non-irrigated agricultural land, mostly located in northern Stillwater County. Wild hay accounts for about 30,000 acres. Grazing land is located throughout the county and is the largest land use classification with over 590,000 acres. Some of the grazing land may include 20 to 160 acre tracts. The total agricultural land classification includes about 790,000 acres or about 69% of the area within Stillwater County. The one acre farmstead classification includes the home site on land classified agricultural for tax purposes. This may also include some home sites on 20 to 160 acre tracts if the rest of the tract is classified agricultural. Less than 1,000 acres were classified as one acre farmsteads, which is less than 1% of the total land area.

### 5.1.1.2. PRIVATE TIMBERLANDS

Over 64,000 acres have been classified as private timberlands. This is less than 6% of the total land area. These private timberlands are somewhat scattered around the county. There are timbered coulees in the Big Coulee and Painted Robe drainages in the northern part of the county; forested hills along both sides of the Yellowstone River valley in the Reed Point and Columbus area; and timber stands along the foothills of the Beartooth Mountains from the West Fork Stillwater drainage to the West Rosebud drainage. Most of the private timberlands are considered site class IV, which is only 25-45 cu. ft/acre and is of marginal commercial value. However, there is some site class III 45-65 cu. ft. /acre stands in the foothills.

### 5.1.1.3. FEDERAL LANDS

Federal lands represent 17% of the total land area. These areas include national forest lands on the Custer National Forest in the southern part of the county, various smaller tracts of land administered by the Bureau of Land Management and the two wildlife refuges in the northern part of the county. These federal lands are managed for multiple use including forestry, range, minerals, recreation and wildlife habitat.

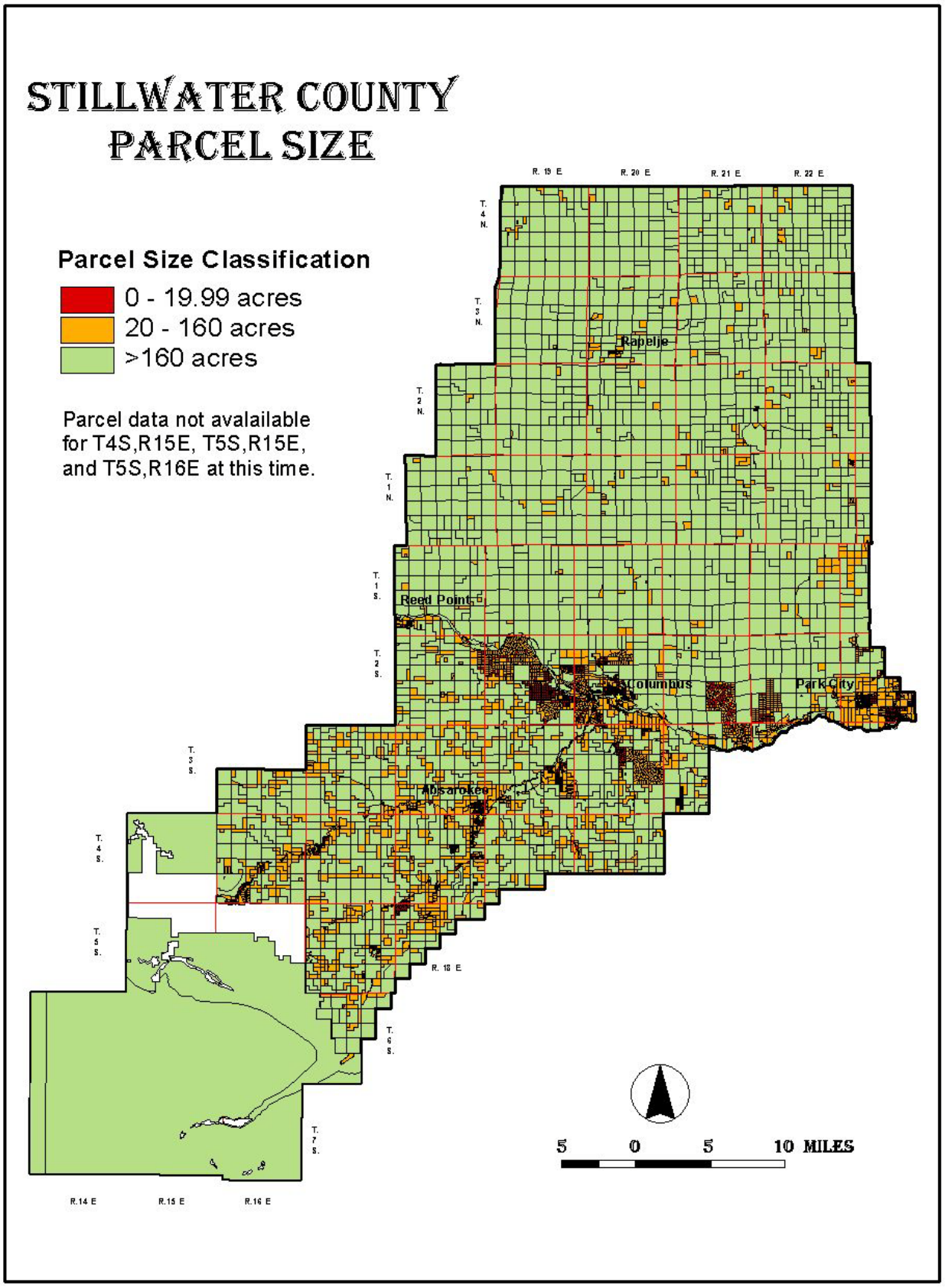
### 5.1.1.4. STATE LANDS

About 46,000 acres are listed as state lands, which are 4% of the total land area, and are comprised primarily of school sections 16 and 36 throughout the county. Most of the state land is leased for agricultural use, but there are also 11 fishing access sites in the central and southern sections of the county for recreational use.

### 5.1.1.5. Tract Land

Lands classified as tract land for appraisal purposes represented over 2% of the total land area or about 26,500 acres. Tract lands are primarily larger developments previously exempted from subdivision review by state law. Most of these properties are located along the Yellowstone

River valley and numerous tracts along the Stillwater River and Rosebud Creek drainages in the southern part of the county. There are no significant subdivisions located in the north end of the county other than the town sites of Rapelje, Molt, Nora and Wheat Basin. The parcel size map shows three parcel size classifications.


STILLWATER COUNTY
PARCEL SIZE
Parcel Size Classification
0 - 19.99 acres
20 - 160 acres
>160 acres
Parcel data not avalailable
for T4S,R15E, T5S,R15E,
and T5S,R16E at this time.
R. 19 E
R. 20 E
R. 21 E
R. 22 E
T. 4 N.
T. 3 N.
T. 2 N.
T. 1 N.
T. 1 S.
T. 2 S.
T. 3 S.
T. 4 S.
T. 5 S.
T. 6 S.
T. 7 S.
R. 18 E
R.14 E
R.15 E
R.16 E
Rapelje
Reed Point
Columbus
Park City
Absaroke
5 0 5 10 MILES

#### 5.1.1.6. OTHER (UNCLASSIFIED)

The remainder of the county, which is less than 2% of the total area, includes town lots, commercial, industrial tracts, exempt properties and unclassified lands. Only 147 acres were classified as City/Town Lots. These properties are located in the town sites of Absarokee, Dean, Fishtail, Molt, Nye, Rapelje, Reed Point and Park City. These lots include both residential and commercial uses. The unincorporated town sites in Stillwater County have business districts of varying size and diversity of business activity. The condition of these districts varies. There are old buildings and newer buildings in various levels of repair. The Absarokee business district is situated along both sides of State Highway No. 78. The Fishtail and Nye business districts are along Highway 419. Park City business district is located south of the railroad tracks and extends to Interstate 90. The Reed Point business district is along Division Street and extends to the I-90 interchange. Rapelje business district is at the northern end of Highway 306. The platted town sites of Nora, Wheat Basin and Springtime are undeveloped at this time.

Another 162 acres have been classified as commercial tracts. Commercial tracts are located in or near the town sites of Absarokee, Dean, Fishtail, Molt, Nye, Rapelje, Reed Point and Park City. A variety of commercial businesses are represented including cafes, restaurants, groceries, motels, gas stations, hardware stores, ranch and farm supplies, gift and flower shops, antique stores, barber and beauty shops, bars, auto repair shops, insurance and real estate offices.

Railroad, utilities and the Stillwater mine site are the primary industrial properties in the county. Railroad property parallels the Yellowstone River through the central part of the county. Utilities are spread out throughout the county from the Mystic Lake Power Plant in the south to the 500kv power lines in northern Stillwater County. The SMC mine site is in the southwestern part of the county. Industrial properties represent less than 1 % of the total land area.

Almost 1,000 acres of agricultural, residential and commercial property was classified as exempt property. These properties include the Special K Ranch, church properties, community centers, senior citizen centers, and other non-profit organizations. Unclassified lands include rivers, streets, alleys, highway right-of-way and other unclassified property.

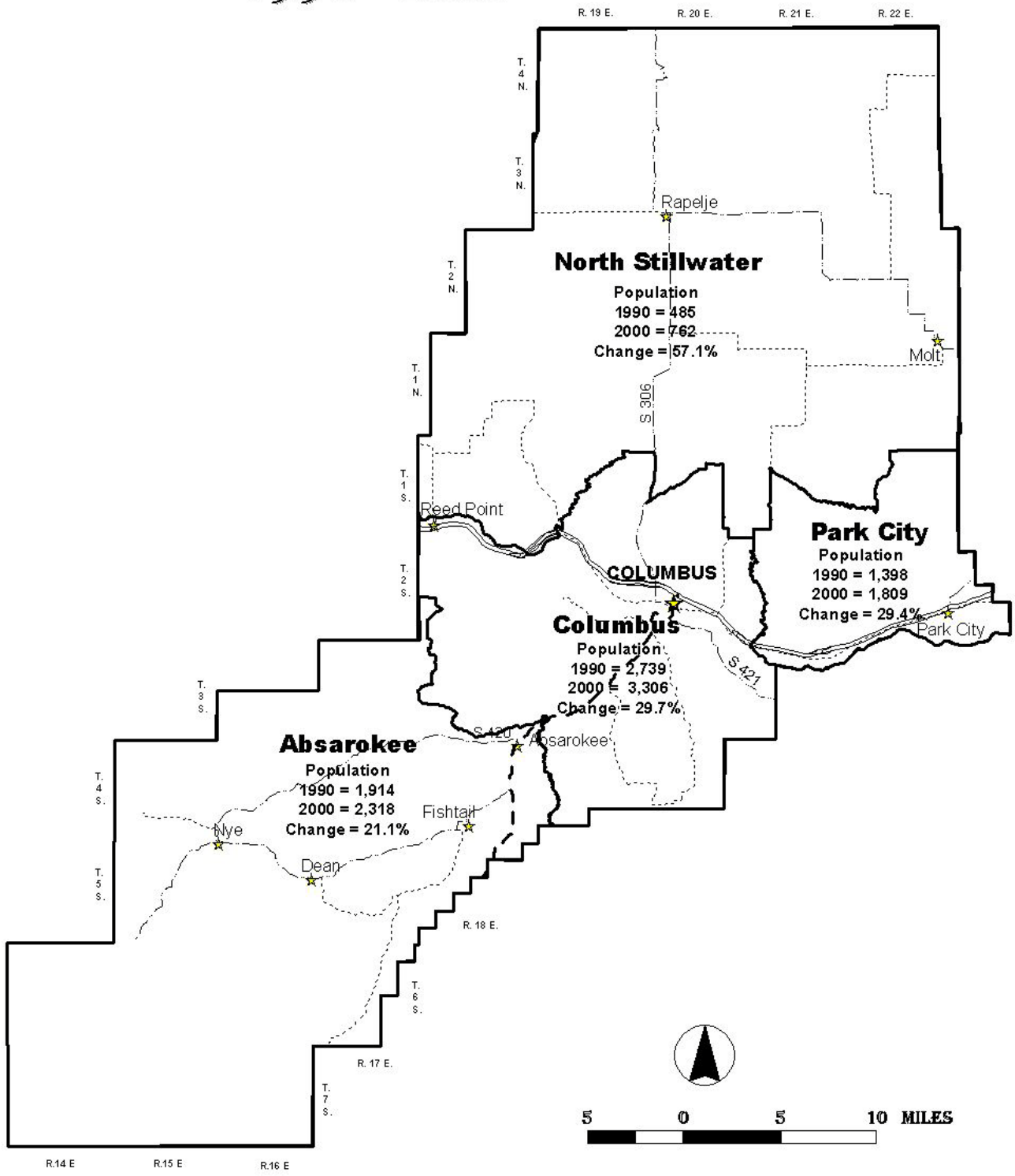
## 5.2 POPULATION:

The 2000 Census has determined a countywide population of 8,195 people. Of the county total 1,911 people were counted within the city-county planning jurisdictional area. Therefore the 2000 Census population of the county planning jurisdictional area was 6,284.

### 5.2.1. County Population by Census Tracts

Stillwater County has four Census Tracts. The Columbus Census Tract was the most populous of the four tracts with 3,306 people. However, only 1,395 people live in the county planning jurisdiction. Absarokee area had a population of 2,318. Park City area had a population of 1,809 and the North Stillwater 762. The Population by Census Tract map shows the geographic distribution and also provides a comparison between 1990 and 2000 Census of population for Stillwater County.

# STILLWATER COUNTY
# POPULATION BY CENSUS TRACTS
# 1990 - 2000



### 5.2.2. Population Characteristics

The 2000 Census collected data on the county population by gender, race, age groups, household type and education. A description of population characteristics follows.

### 5.2.3. Population by Gender

The 2000 Census profile of general demographic characteristics indicates 51% of the total population was male and 49% female.

| Gender | 2000 | % |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 4,178 | 51.0% |
| Female | 4,017 | 49.0% |

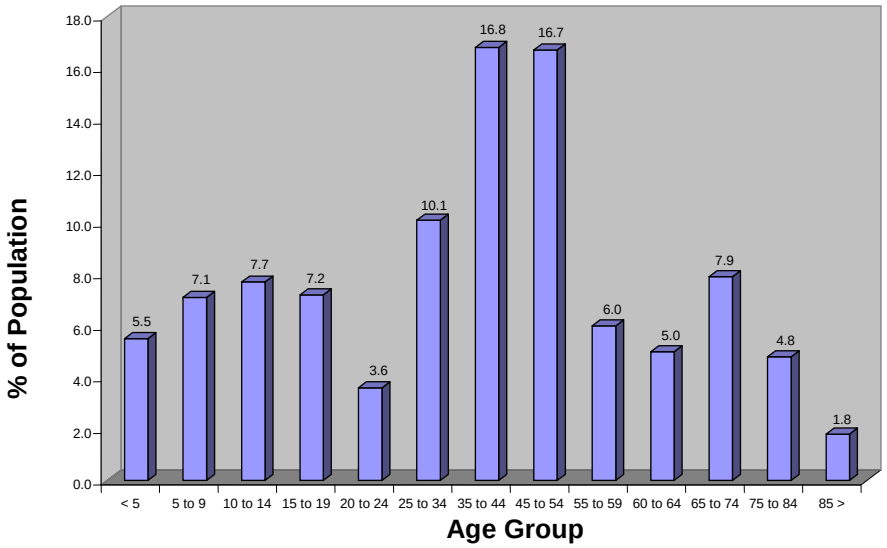
### 5.2.4. Population by Race

The 2000 Census profile of general demographic characteristics also indicates 96.8% of the total population was white and only 3.2% other races including American Indian, African American, Asian, or some other race.

| Race | 2000 | % |
|---|---|---|
| White | 7,933 | 96.8% |
| Other | 262 | 3.2% |

### 5.2.5. Population by Age

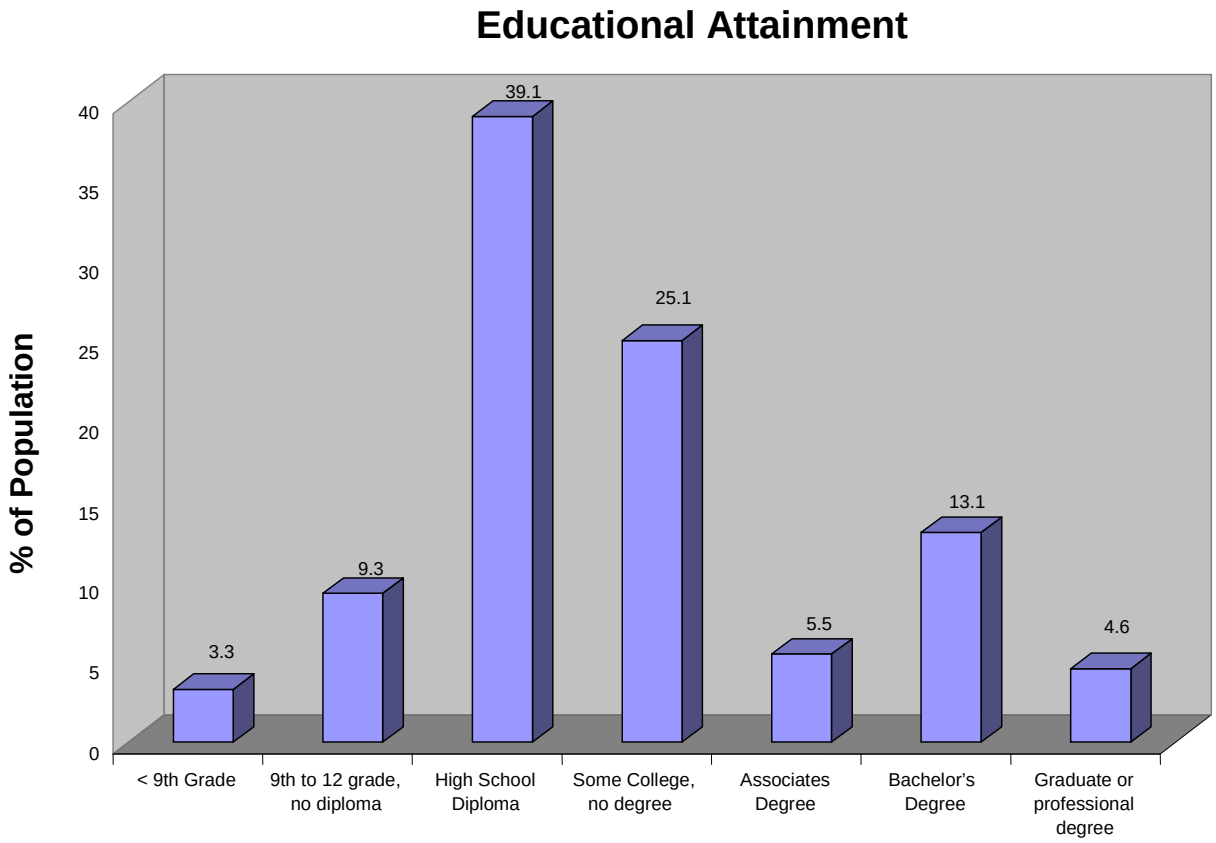
The 2000 Census profile of general demographic characteristics provides information on the percentage of the total population by various age groups as displayed in the bar graph below. This information indicates the out migration that occurs with the 18-24 age groups after graduation from high school, relatively large groups between ages 25 to 54 as a result of employment opportunities, and the smallest age group is 85 and older.




*(Source: U.S. Census Bureau)*

### 5.2.6. Educational attainment

The 2000 Census provides information on the educational attainment as a percentage of the county population. Over 39 % of the population received a high school diploma; over 25 % has some college education; 5.5 % have an associate's degree, over 13 % have a bachelor's degree and 4.6 % have graduate or professional degrees. The graph below shows the educational attainment of the Stillwater County population.




*(Source: U.S. Census Bureau)*

### 5.2.7. Households by Type

The 2000 Census profile of general demographic characteristics provides information on the total households by type. Total households counted in the county were 3,234 with 762 located in the city-county planning jurisdiction. Therefore, 2,472 housing units were in the county planning jurisdiction. The average household size was 2.48 people and the average family size was 2.94 people.

| **Households** | **2000** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| Total households | 2,413 | |
| Family households | 1,798 | 72.6 |
| Non-family households | 680 | 27.4 |
| Average household size | 2.48 | n/a |
| Average family size | 2.94 | n/a |

## 5.3 HOUSING NEEDS:

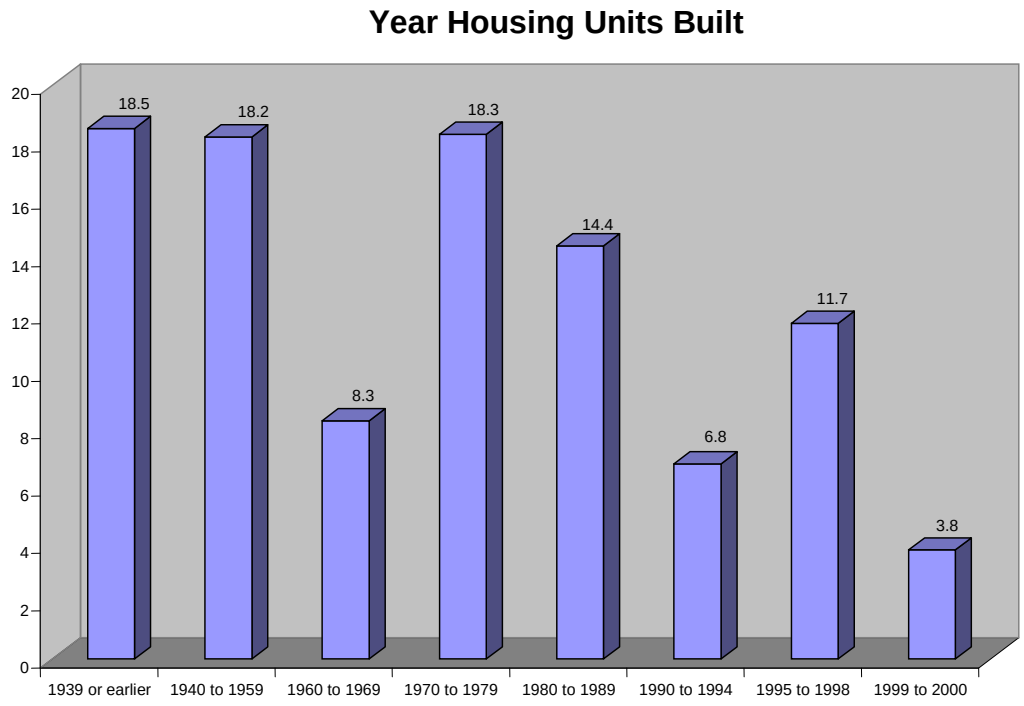
The total number of housing units reported for Stillwater County in the 2000 Census was 3,947. The map of housing units by Census tract shows the distribution of housing units around the

county and provides a comparison with the 1990 data. The Columbus Division had 1,491 housing units in 2000; however, 821 were in the Columbus city-county planning jurisdiction, therefore, the county planning jurisdiction a total of 3,126 housing units.

| **Housing Units** | **2000** |
|---|---|
| Stillwater County total | 3,947 |
| Columbus Area | 811 |
| County Planning Jurisdiction | 3,136 |

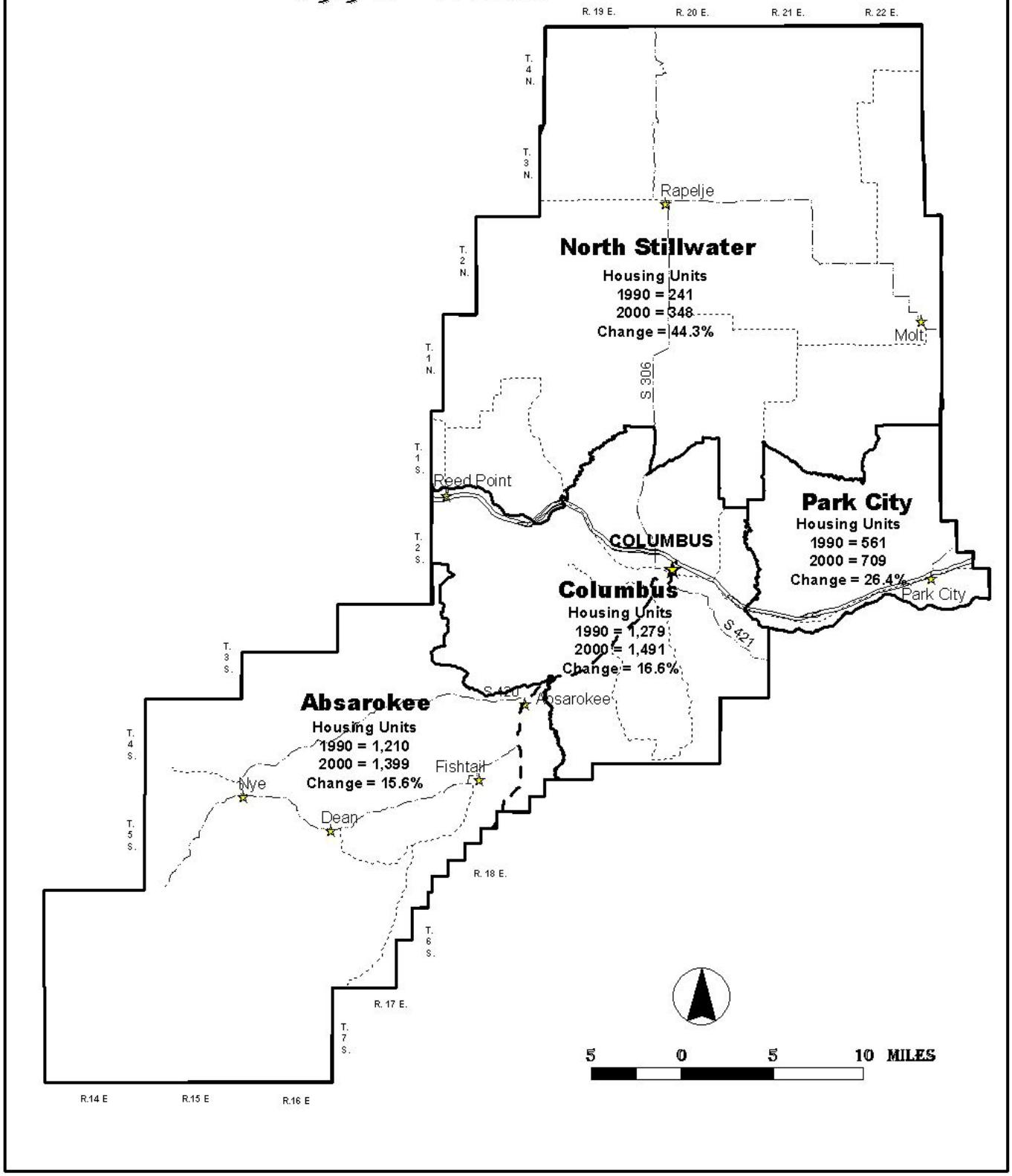
**Year housing units built**

The following graph shows the relative age of housing units in Stillwater County from 1939 or earlier through the time the 2000 Census was taken in March, 2000.




*(Source: U.S. Census Bureau)*

# STILLWATER COUNTY
# HOUSING UNITS BY CENSUS TRACTS
# 1990 - 2000



## Structural Characteristics

The majority of all residences have been built since 1970. The majority of housing units have five or more rooms. Over 99% of all housing units have plumbing facilities. Over 98 % of all residences have telephones.

Natural gas is used to heat over 50% of all housing units, use of propane is over 22%, electric heat is over 11%, wood 8 % and other alternative fuels are used in the remainder of the housing units.

Single family residences continue to comprise the majority of housing types in the county. Over 70% of the housing units are single family residences. About 20% of the housing units are mobile homes and the remaining 10% are multi-family residences or other alternative housing units.

The majority of residences in the county have individual wells with the exception of residents served by the water systems in Absarokee, Columbus, Rapelje or other potable sources of water. The majority of residences have septic tanks for sewage disposal. Over 40 % are connected to public sewer systems in Absarokee, Columbus, Park City and Reed Point.

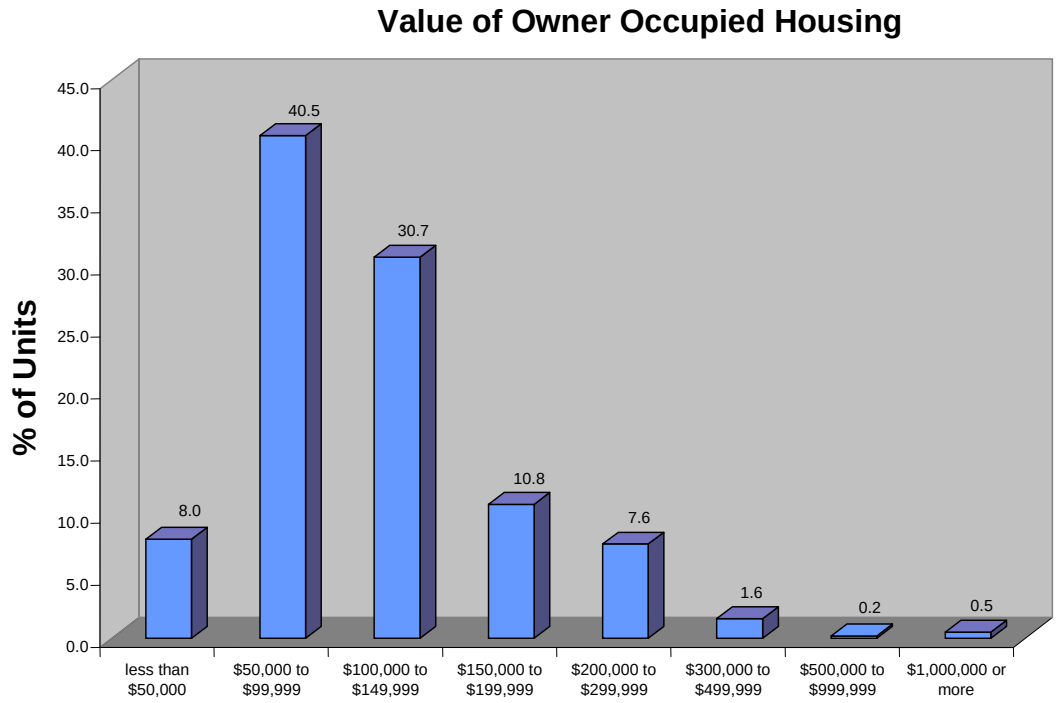
**Housing Occupancy**

The total housing units included 2,482 (79.1%) occupied and 654 (20.9% ) vacant units. Owner occupied units were 77.4% or 2,482 units and renter occupied units were 22.5% or 558 units. Vacant units reported in the 2000 Census include 461 seasonal, recreational and occasional use housing units. Therefore, only 6.2% or 193 of the total units were vacant.

| **Characteristic** | **2000** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| Total Units | 3,136 | 100 |
| Owner Occupied | 1,924 | 61.3 |
| Renter Occupied | 558 | 17.8 |
| Occupied Units | 2,482 | 79.1 |
| Vacant Units | 193 | 6.2 |
| Seasonal/recreational | 461 | 14.7 |
| Total Vacant Units | 654 | 20.9 |

## Housing Costs

Information on the value of owner occupied housing units and monthly rent paid by renters is also included in the Census. The mean value of an owner occupied home in Stillwater County in 2000 was $102,200. The median monthly cost with a mortgage was $848. The median monthly gross rent was $439.




*(Source: U.S. Census Bureau)*

**Subdivision Activity**

The following information on subdivision activity relates to lots or tracts created by the filing of subdivision plats or certificates of survey. These lots or tracts are considered to be building sites ready for the construction of housing units. The number of such lots established for commercial, industrial or multifamily purposes are negligible.

| Type | 1990-2000 | Average |
|---|---|---|
| Subdivision Lots | 532 | 53.2 per year |
| Tracts (exempt from review) | 337 | 33.7 per year |
| Total | 869 | 86.9 per year |

*(Source: Stillwater County Planning Dept.)*

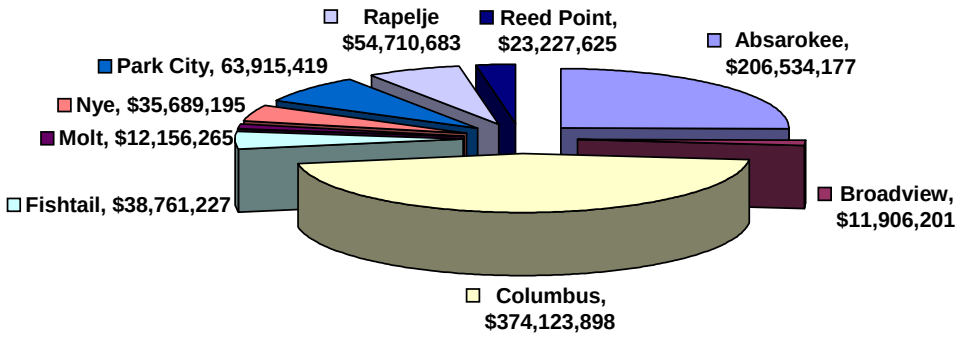
The average number of new residential lots processed through subdivision review is now greater than tracts created through certificates of survey and the use of exemptions from subdivision review as a result of legislative changes from 1990-2000.

# 5.4 ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

## AREA ECONOMY

The 2003-2004 market valuation of Stillwater County was $821,024,689. The Columbus area represents over $190,000,000 in market value. Therefore the county planning jurisdiction has a market value of more than $625,000,000. The chart below shows the relative distribution of market value by elementary school district.

**Stillwater County Market Values by Elementary School District 2003-04**




*(Source: Montana Department of Revenue)*

## Taxable valuation

The 2003-2004 taxable valuation of Stillwater County was $30,398,001. The Columbus area represents over $6,230,000 taxable value. Therefore the county planning jurisdiction has a taxable value of more than $24,000,000. The relative distribution of 2003-04 taxable value for elementary school districts is similar to the market value distribution shown in the pie graph above. Molt, Broadview, and Reed Point with the taxable valuation below $1 million each; Absarokee and Columbus with the largest taxable values of $6.7 million and $12.3 million respectively. Taxable values for the other school districts range between $1 million and $4 million.

Of the total taxable valuation mining represents over 30% of the total taxable value; utilities represent about 20%; agricultural property is about 15%; residential , commercial and industrial property is almost 30%; railroad property is about 1.5%; taxable value from other property represents the remainder.

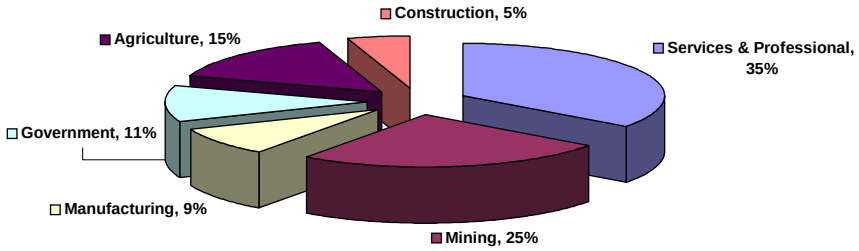
## Bonding Capacity

Stillwater County has a general obligation bonding capacity of $3,419,775, which is 11.25 % of the overall 2003-04 taxable valuation. At this time, Stillwater County has no outstanding general obligation bonds. A revenue bond, in the amount of 1.9 million dollars, was issued in 2000 to fund the construction of the Assisted Living Center at the Stillwater Community Hospital.

## Employment by type of industry

The principal economic activities in Stillwater County for employment include farm and agricultural services, mining, manufacturing, services and professional, construction and government. Approximately 35% of the workforce is employed in services and professional occupations, mining provides about 25% of the total employment in the county, about 15 % of total employment is in farm and agricultural services, government employs about 11% of the workforce, manufacturing represents about 9% and construction provides another 5%.

### Employment by Industry




*(Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics)*

## Employment Status

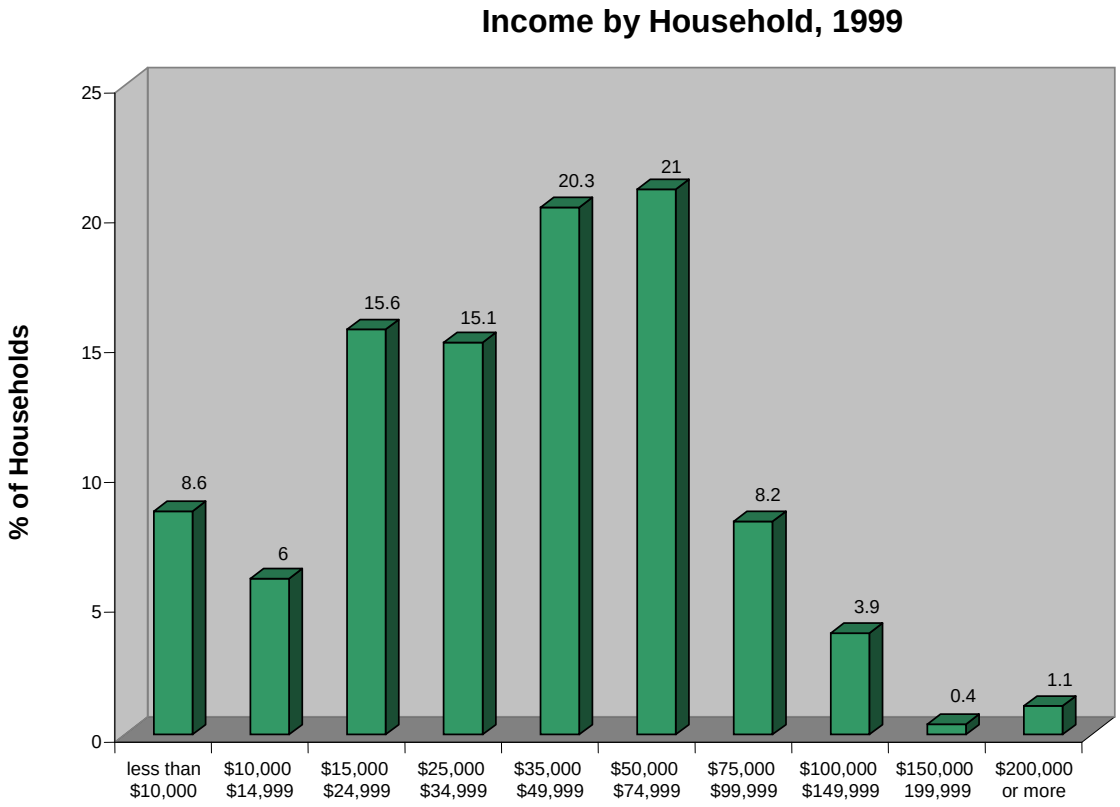
The total civilian labor force in Stillwater County was reported to be 4,192 in the 2000 Census with 877 of these people in Columbus. Therefore the civilian labor force for the county planning jurisdiction was approximately 3,300. This is about 65% of the total population. The Stillwater County unemployment rate was reported to be 6.8%.

## Personal Income from Labor and Non-Labor Sources

Non-labor income represents 40% of total personal income, mining represents about 26 %, services and professional 16%, manufacturing 7%, government 7%, , construction 4%, and farm and agricultural services represents about 2%.

## Income

The median household income was reported to be $39,205 in 1999, median family income was $45,205, and per capita income was $18,468 per person. Less than 10% of the population was considered to be below the poverty level. The following chart shows the relative distribution of household income by income bracket.




*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census*

## Additional Economic Information

Additional economic information from *A Statistical Report* from the Montana County Database for Stillwater County issued by the Montana Department of Commerce, Census and Economic Information Center. Stillwater County also has an approved Overall Economic Development Plan and is a member of the Beartooth Resource Conservation & Development Economic Development District.

Stillwater County has four banks and two Credit Unions, which includes two Yellowstone Banks located in Absarokee and Columbus, two United Banks located in Absarokee and Columbus, as well as Valley Federal Credit Union and Avanta Federal Credit Union in Columbus. United Bank is a certified lender for the Montana Economic Development Board; they process SBA loans and act as a lending agent for the Montana Board of Housing. The Yellowstone Banks process SBA Loans and are a processing agent for the Montana Board of Housing. Quarterly financial reports are available from United Banks, Yellowstone Banks and Valley Credit Union.

# 5.5 LOCAL SERVICES

### STILLWATER COUNTY

Stillwater County is a political subdivision of the state of Montana with general government powers only. Stillwater County government is limited to actions specifically authorized by Montana law.

Stillwater County is governed by a three-member Board of Commissioners and has an elected Attorney, Clerk & Recorder, Clerk of District Court, Justice of the Peace, Sheriff, Treasurer and part-time Superintendent of Schools. Duties of county officials are specified by Montana law. Budgetary, contractual, payroll, and insurance authority are the responsibility of the County Commissioners.

A number of citizen boards are appointed by the Commissioners to oversee or provide public input on specific areas such as solid waste, library, airport, planning, health, and weed control.

Stillwater County provides numerous services typical of a rural county government. Law enforcement services and volunteer search and rescue unit are budgeted through the County Sheriff's Office. The search and rescue vehicles and equipment are housed at the new search and rescue building in Columbus. Road and bridge, law enforcement, and solid waste are the largest departments in the county organization. Other services include environmental health, fire control, civil defense, noxious weed control, planning, economic development, extension, justice and district court, mental health, hospital maintenance and vital statistics.

Services such as planning and emergency service dispatching are coordinated with the Town of Columbus. Mental health, juvenile detention, and long-term jail services are provided in cooperation with regional government associations or non-profit entities. Capital projects in the county are often funded through grants applied for and coordinated with various departments.

Special districts, which are legal entities that provide a specific service, are established by the county commissioners following a petition and hearing process. These districts are budgeted and accounted for through enterprise accounts. Funds for the enterprise accounts are collected through the taxation process from the property owners within a special district that benefit from the specific service. Administration of these Districts is handled by commissioner-appointed boards. There are representatives from all areas of the county on the boards. Rate increases must receive commissioner approval.

Additional state and federal funds that are received are enhanced 911, gas tax, junk vehicles, underground storage tanks, county land planning coal tax, metal mine tax reserve, payment in lieu of taxes (PILT), alcohol funds, and predatory animal. Funds in this category are provided by the federal/state government or from non-tax sources. They are included in the county budgeting process and can only be used for specified purposes. Drug Forfeiture funds allow the expenditure of funds resulting from the sale of property seized during drug busts. Records Preservation funds are collected from document filing fees for the express purpose of insuring that county records are preserved for posterity. This program provides for sentencing options such as house arrest, community service or work release programs.

Capital improvement funds include junk vehicle, library, county fire, general fund, road depreciation reserve and bridge depreciation reserve. Funds have been set aside so that facilities and equipment can be upgraded. Metal Mine Reserve funds accrue from metal mines license taxes distributed by the state. These funds are distributed annually between the affected high schools, elementary school districts and the county. A trust fund has also been established to handle the tail-end impacts from mine closure or reduction in work force. Grant funds have also been budgeted for projects funded through grants under federal and state grant programs.

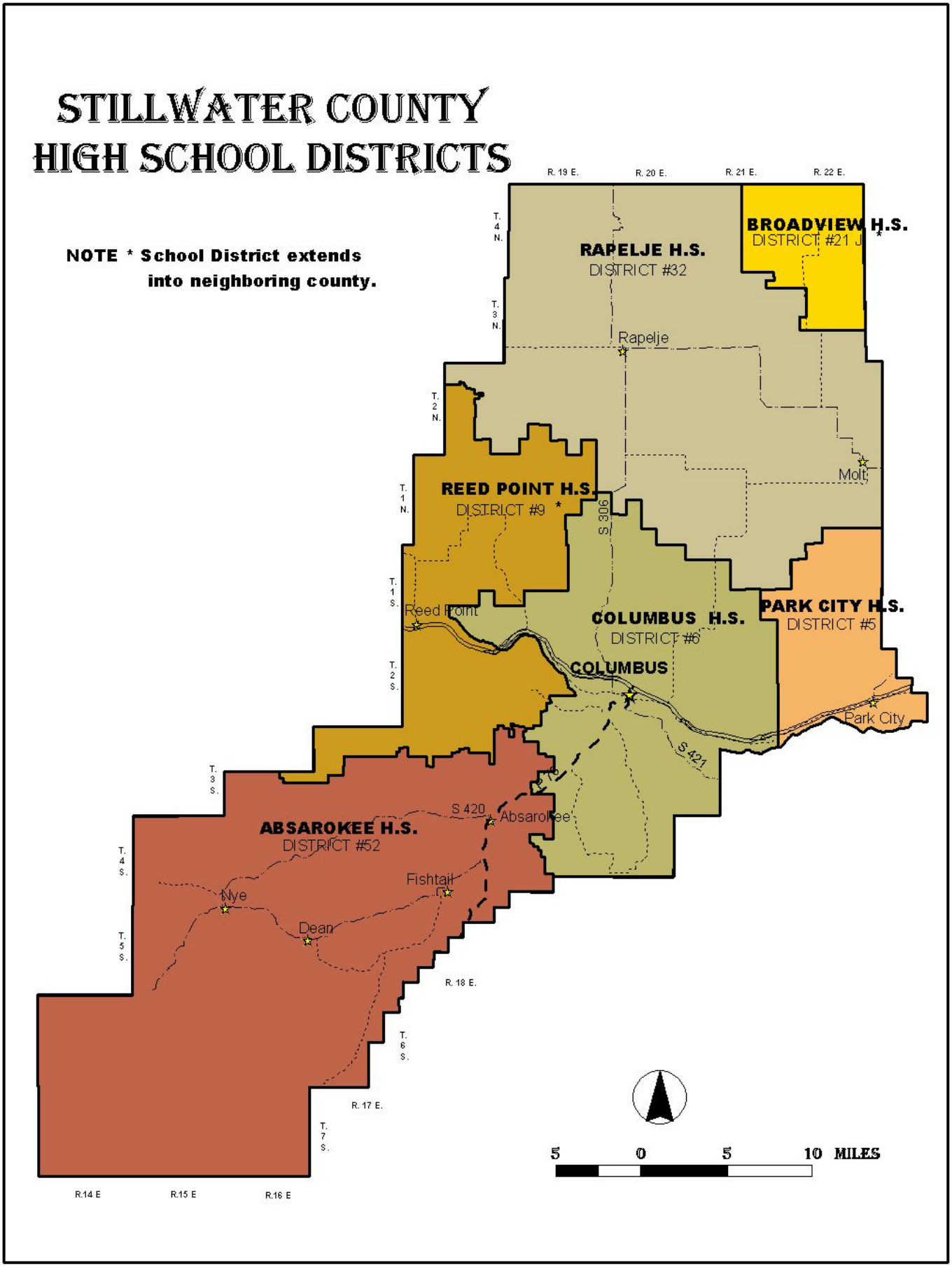
Stillwater County owns 23 properties outside of Columbus, excluding properties in Columbus and road right-of-way. Ten of these properties are located in southern Stillwater County and 13 are located in northern part of the county. These county properties are used for parks, county shops, fire stations, sewer lagoons, solid waste sites and a gravel pit.

## SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Stillwater County has five high school districts and eight elementary school districts plus a portion of the Broadview district. The following maps show the location of the high school and elementary school districts. Some of the school districts extend into neighboring counties. There were 456 high school students enrolled for the 2002-03 school year and 1067 elementary school students enrolled the year for a total enrollment of 1,523 students.

The curriculum for elementary schools includes math, reading, health, writing, language, spelling, social science, physical education, art, music, library and some schools are beginning to offer computer classes. High schools are required to offer a minimum of 18 units consisting of language arts 4 units, American History 1 unit, American History and democracy 2 units, math 2 units, science 2 units, health and P.E. 1 unit, social sciences 2 units, fine art 1 unit, practical arts 2 units, and elective classes 2 units. Absarokee, Columbus, Park City, Reed Point and Rapelje high schools offer numerous other elective classes. Special educational services are available to all schools through a county cooperative program.

Nye Elementary School


STILLWATER COUNTY
HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICTS
NOTE * School District extends into neighboring county.
R. 19 E.
R. 20 E.
R. 21 E.
R. 22 E.
T. 4 N.
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T. 4 S.
T. 5 S.
T. 6 S.
T. 7 S.
R. 18 E.
R. 17 E.
R.14 E
R.15 E
R.16 E
RAPELJE H.S.
DISTRICT #32
BROADVIEW H.S.
DISTRICT #21 J
Rapelje
Molt
REED POINT H.S.
DISTRICT #9 *
S 306
Reed Point
COLUMBUS H.S.
DISTRICT #6
COLUMBUS
PARK CITY H.S.
DISTRICT #5
Park City
S 421
S 420
Absarokee
ABSAROKEE H.S.
DISTRICT #52
Fishtail
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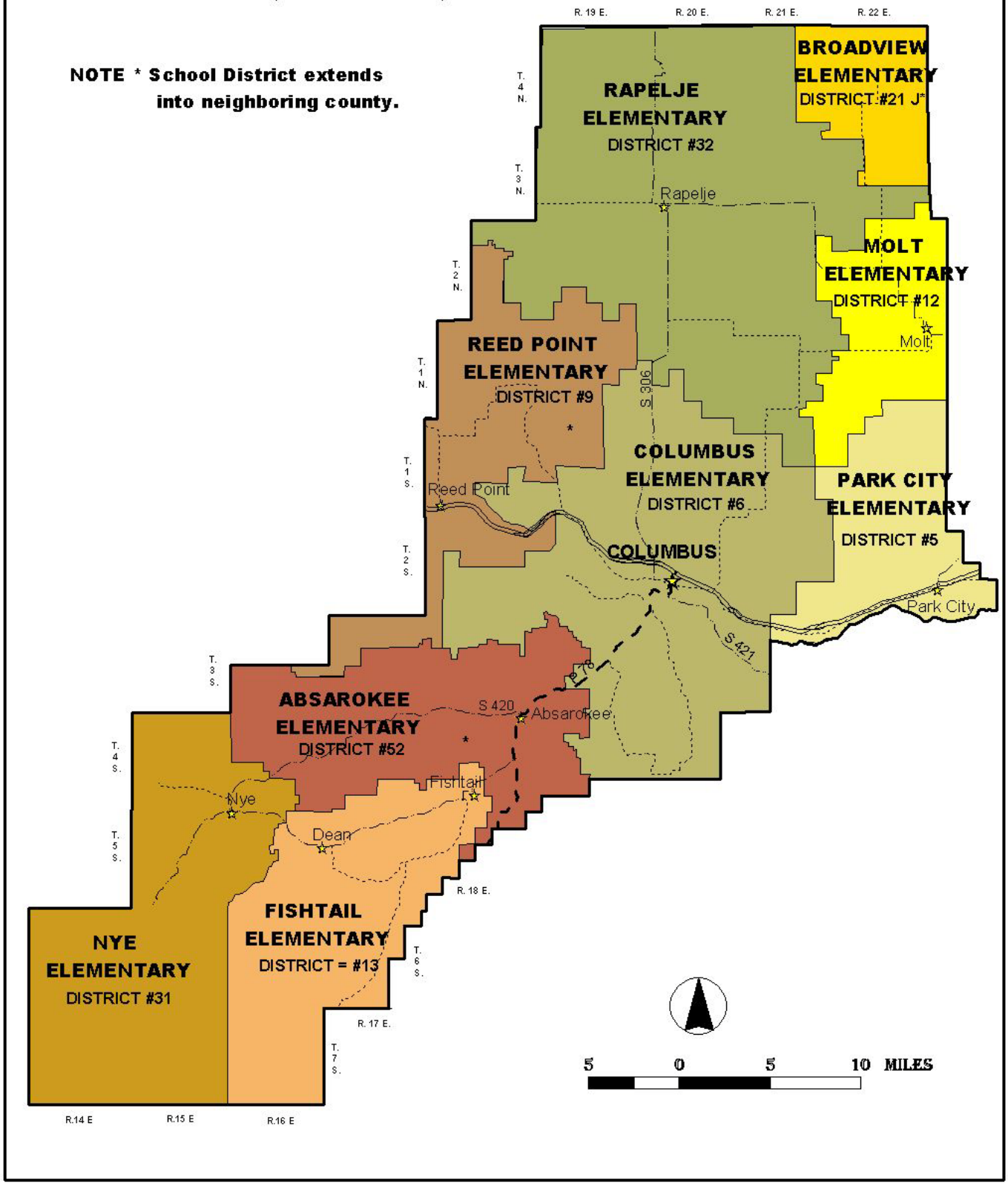
Dean
5 0 5 10 MILES

# STILLWATER COUNTY ELEMENTARY DISTRICTS



## FIRE DISTRICTS

Fire protection in Stillwater County is handled through a combination of rural fire districts and fire departments. At this time, all the departments and districts operate with volunteer firefighters. The county commissioners have the responsibility of providing rural wildland fire protection to the county. The Commission appoints a County Rural Fire Warden and cooperates with federal and state fire protection agencies. The County Rural Fire Warden supervises any county crews available for wildland fire protection and has responsibility for rural wildland fire protection of those areas not covered by a fire department or district.

In Stillwater County, there are four rural fire districts. The four fire districts in the county are Absarokee, Broadview, Columbus, and Park City. The Broadview district includes an area in the four counties of Stillwater, Yellowstone, Golden Valley, and Musselshell. In addition there are nine volunteer fire Departments or Companies: Absarokee, Broadview, Columbus Rural, Columbus Volunteer, Molt, Park City, Rapelje, Reed Point, and Nye. The following map shows the location of the fire districts.

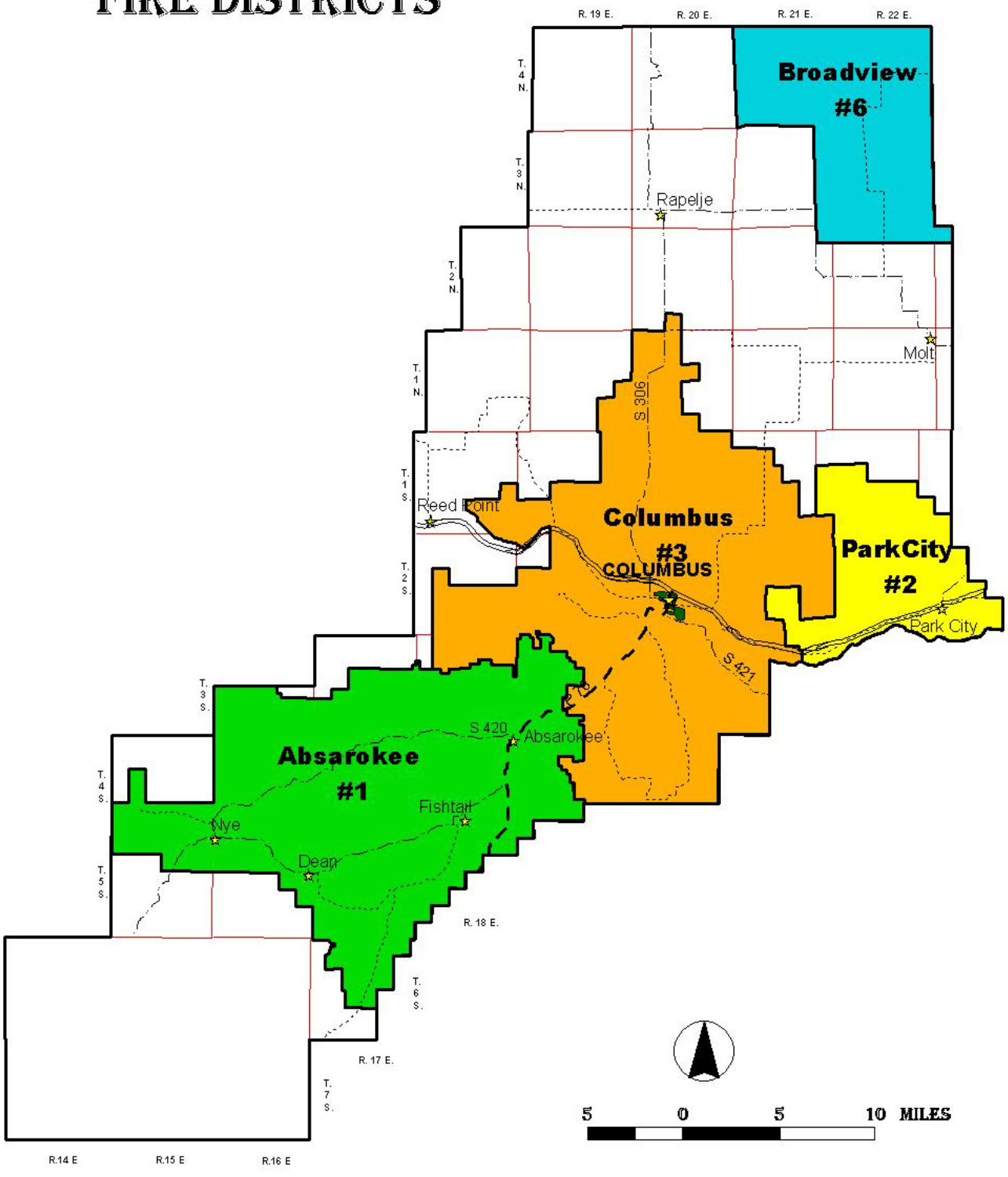
Each fire district is served by a board of trustees elected from residents of the district. The rural fire boards prepare an annual budget for the fire district, and administer the budget and any special levies. The board has the duty and authority to provide firefighting apparatus, equipment, and facilities for the protection of the district. The board also has the responsibility to create fire companies or departments.

The Chief or a representative from each department meet for rural fire council meetings as needed, but at least quarterly. The County Fire Warden is a member of the County Fire Council, and acts as a liaison between the Fire Council and the Board of County Commissioners. Written mutual aid agreements have been signed among and between all fire districts or departments in the county, as well as with Sweet Grass, Carbon, and Yellowstone counties, and similar agreements have been reached with state and federal fire control agencies. The departments within the county also participate in the state mutual aid program.

The Absarokee Rural Fire District #1 was formed in 1955 and covers approximately 313 square mile area, including the communities of Absarokee, Dean, Fishtail, and Nye. There are two departments in the Absarokee Rural Fire District, Absarokee and Nye. Each department has its own chief and an individual set of bylaws. The Absarokee fire hall was constructed in the 40s. A new fire hall was completed in 2002, and the old hall sold to the Absarokee Water District. The Absarokee Department has the ability to provide structure, wildlands, rescue, EMS, vehicle accident, and haz-mat protection.

In Nye, a fire hall was constructed in 1973, and the Nye Volunteer Fire Department was formed in January 1974. An addition was constructed on the fire hall in 1988. The Nye Department is

# STILLWATER COUNTY FIRE DISTRICTS



able to provide structure, wildlands, rescue, EMS, vehicle accidents, hazmat, and other specialized protection such as water and mountain rescue.

The Park City Rural Fire District #2 was formed in 1956. Its 100 square mile area extends from the Pine Crest residential development to the Yellowstone County line. The original portion of the fire hall in Park City was constructed in 1956, and has been expanded since that time. The Park City Department has the ability to provide structure, wildlands, vehicle accident, rescue, hazmat, and other specialized protection such as weapons of mass destruction.

The Columbus Rural Fire District #3 was formed in 1989. The Columbus Rural Fire District covers a 375 square mile area extending towards the communities of Absarokee, Reed Point, Park City and Rapelje. The Columbus Rural Fire Department is able to provide structure, wildland, rescue, EMS, vehicle accident, hazmat, and other specialized protection such as water, mountain, and confined rescue. The town of Columbus Volunteer Fire Department has existed since 1909. The two departments share many of the same volunteers. The fire hall and training facility they jointly occupy was constructed in 2002. Each agency has its own firefighting equipment, but through an interlocal agreement share all manpower and equipment and operate together as one unit.

Approximately 83 square miles of the Broadview Volunteer Fire District #4 is located in Stillwater County, situated in the county's extreme northeast corner. The Broadview Fire District relies on volunteers based at the fire hall in Broadview, located approximately 15 miles from the Stillwater County line.

The Molt Volunteer Fire Department was formed in 1980, but is not located in an established fire district. An approximately 154 square mile area north of Park City and east of Rapelje are covered by the Molt volunteers. The fire hall in Molt was constructed in the 1970s. The Molt Fire Department is equipped and trained to provide wildlands, EMS, and vehicle accident protection.

The Rapelje Volunteer Fire Department covers approximately 312 square miles that includes a substantial portion of northern Stillwater County. The Department is not located in an established fire district. The Rapelje Fire Department is equipped and trained.

The Reed Point Volunteer Fire Company was formed in 1986 and incorporated in 2001. Its 92 square mile area extends halfway to the communities of Columbus and Rapelje. There are two fire buildings in Reed Point, one was constructed in 1986, and the second was constructed in 2002. The Reed Point Fire Department is equipped for and is currently training for fighting structural fires.

Limitations to fire service in Stillwater County is the fact that the three North County communities of Reed Point, Rapelje, and Molt have equipment and training primarily to fight grass fires, although they will respond to structure fires and attack them from the outside only. This limitation is considered when reviewing proposed subdivisions and may be reflected in the insurance rates paid by property owners in these communities.

The Stillwater County Fire Department Directory provides more detailed information on the

number of firefighters certified, fire fighting abilities, equipment, and radio frequencies used.

## WATER & SEWER DISTRICTS

In addition to county services, there are three water and sewer districts; Absarokee, Park City and Reed Point. These water and sewer districts were established as autonomous districts and are governed by a five-member board elected by those in the district. Absarokee sewer district was established as a rural special improvement district governed by the county commissioners with a part-time manager overseeing daily operations of the systems.

## SPECIAL LIGHT DISTRICTS

There are also three light districts; Absarokee, Park City and Reed Point. The Funds to pay for the street lights in these districts are collected through the taxation process and paid by the county.

## PRIVATE UTILITIES

### Natural Gas and Oil

The County is traversed by high pressure natural gas transmission lines and oil pipelines. A 16 inch oil pipeline was constructed across the northern part of the county in 1995 to transport crude oil to refineries in the Billings/Laurel area. There are gathering lines in the Lake Basin area, a compressor station (built in 1974) southwest of Molt and an 8 inch high pressure transmission line from the compressor station to Laurel. A four inch natural gas transmission line is fed from the Lake Basin Fields and is tied into their main gas transmission system. Natural gas is piped to Billings from northern Stillwater County.

Northwestern Energy currently provides natural gas service to the town sites within the county except Park City which is served by Montana Dakota Utilities. Propane is also used by many rural customers.

Express Pipeline Inc. constructed and is currently operating a 24 inch crude oil pipeline extending approximately 43 miles across northern Stillwater County. Altamont Gas Transmission Company proposed constructing a 30 inch natural gas pipeline across northern Stillwater County. The Environmental Impact Statement was completed for this project, but the pipeline has not been constructed.

### Electricity

Four companies currently provide electrical service to Stillwater County. They are Northwestern Energy, Beartooth Electric, Yellowstone Valley Electric Co-op and Fergus Electric. Fergus Electric provides the electrical service for the Big Coulee area in the northern most part of the county, Yellowstone Valley Electric Co-op provides electrical service for eastern portions of the county along the Yellowstone County line in the rural Park City and Molt areas, Beartooth Electric provides electrical service in rural areas of the county all the way from Rapelje to Nye and Fishtail area. Northwestern Energy serves Absarokee, Columbus, Reed Point, Park City, Stillwater Mine and some of the rural areas along with the other electric providers.

The only power generating plant in the county is located at Mystic Lake in southern Stillwater County. Several major transmission lines and substations are located in the county. There are

two 500 kv power lines across northern Stillwater County. There is also a 230 kv line, a 161 kv line, and a 100 kv line running north/south through the county from the 161 kv line north of Columbus. Substations are located west of Columbus and south of Absarokee.

### Telephone

There are three telephone companies providing local service to Stillwater County. They are Qwest Communications, Triangle Telephone Cooperative Association, Inc., and Project Telephone Company. Triangle Telephone Cooperative Association, Inc. serves the northern part of the county, Quest Communications serves central areas of the county and Project Telephone Company serves southern Stillwater County. Long distance phone service is available from several companies of the customer's choice.

Much of the local telephone service has been upgraded with the installation of fiber optic lines from the mid 1980's to the mid 1990's. The improvements have provided faster and clearer telecommunications, the availability of internet, and other enhanced services. The enhanced 911 emergency communication system was installed in Stillwater County in 2004.

Satellite and wireless telecommunications are also available in the county. Cellular phone service is also available in the county from several providers. Verizon and Cellular One are currently the main providers. Microwave relay towers that are used for land line phone service are located in various places in the county.

### Television and Radio

Cable and satellite television is also available with numerous channels and packages to choose from. Cable service is limited within the county, primarily to the communities of Absarokee, Columbus and Park City. Local television stations are broadcast from Billings and can be received in the county with an exterior antenna. Numerous radio stations are broadcast in the region. National Public Radio is available on two different channels within the county.

## MEDICAL and EMERGENCY SERVICES

### Ambulance Services

Two volunteer ambulance services exist in unincorporated areas of Stillwater County, located in Absarokee and Park City. The Absarokee Volunteer Ambulance Service relies on volunteer emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and operates from the Absarokee Fire Hall. The Park City Volunteer Ambulance Service has volunteer EMTs. There are also four Quick Response Units with EMT's or first responders in Molt, Rapelje, Reed Point and Broadview. The Columbus Ambulance Service, while operating from a building on the hospital grounds in the incorporated Town of Columbus, does provide service to areas within the Stillwater County Planning jurisdiction as well. The Columbus Ambulance Service is staffed with volunteer EMT's.

### Stillwater Community Hospital

Stillwater County owns the Stillwater Community Hospital building and provides funds for building maintenance each year. The hospital is a subcontractor with the county of pass-through grants such as the Women, Infants and Children program or other health-related state funds

available to counties. This County-owned hospital consists of an emergency room, 23-bed hospital, the Meadow Lark extended care facility and pharmacy. It is located in Columbus, near the Deaconess Columbus Clinic, and houses Columbus Volunteer Ambulance's garage on-site.

### Mental Health Services

South Central Montana Regional Mental Health Center also has a satellite office in Columbus. Out patient services include home visits, emergency services, consultation and education, services to alcoholics and drug abusers, screening and diagnosis, aftercare, services to children and elderly clients are also provided. The staff includes a psychologist and a drug/alcohol counselor.

### Private Medical Clinics

Two private clinics are operated in Stillwater County as adjuncts to Billings-area hospitals. The Columbus Clinic is a branch of the Deaconess Hospital's Billings Clinic, and the Absarokee Medical Clinic is operated by St. Vincent's Health Center. Each provides local residents an opportunity to visit with area physicians, and also provide a venue for outpatient surgical procedures.

### Stillwater County Assisted Living Center

Constructed in 2000 as an adjunct to the Stillwater Community Hospital, this County-owned facility consists of fourteen apartments for senior citizens, plus an 80-seat dining facility served by the hospital kitchen.

### Private Convalescent Center

Beartooth Manor, also known by its prior name of Stillwater Convalescent Center, is an 82-bed nursing home located in Columbus that was constructed in 1973. This privately-owned facility also offers outpatient physical therapy and home health care.

### Senior Citizen Centers

The communities of Absarokee, Columbus, and Rapelje host senior's center organizations which provide a local place where senior citizens may meet, have events, and enjoy regular hot meals. All are incorporated as non-profit organizations.

The Absarokee Senior Center is located on Woodard Avenue (Highway 78), and is owned by the local senior's organization. The Columbus seniors also own their Senior Center on Palladium Place. The Rapelje seniors meet in the community-owned Stockman's Café, which functions as a community center.

Absarokee Senior Center

## CEMETERY DISTRICTS

There are only three cemetery districts in Stillwater County; Park City, Rapelje and Rosebud. However, most communities in Stillwater County manage and maintain a local cemetery. Mountain View Cemetery is maintained by the Town of Columbus and is located within the city-county planning jurisdiction at the intersection of Hwy 10 and Rapelje Rd. (Hwy 306).

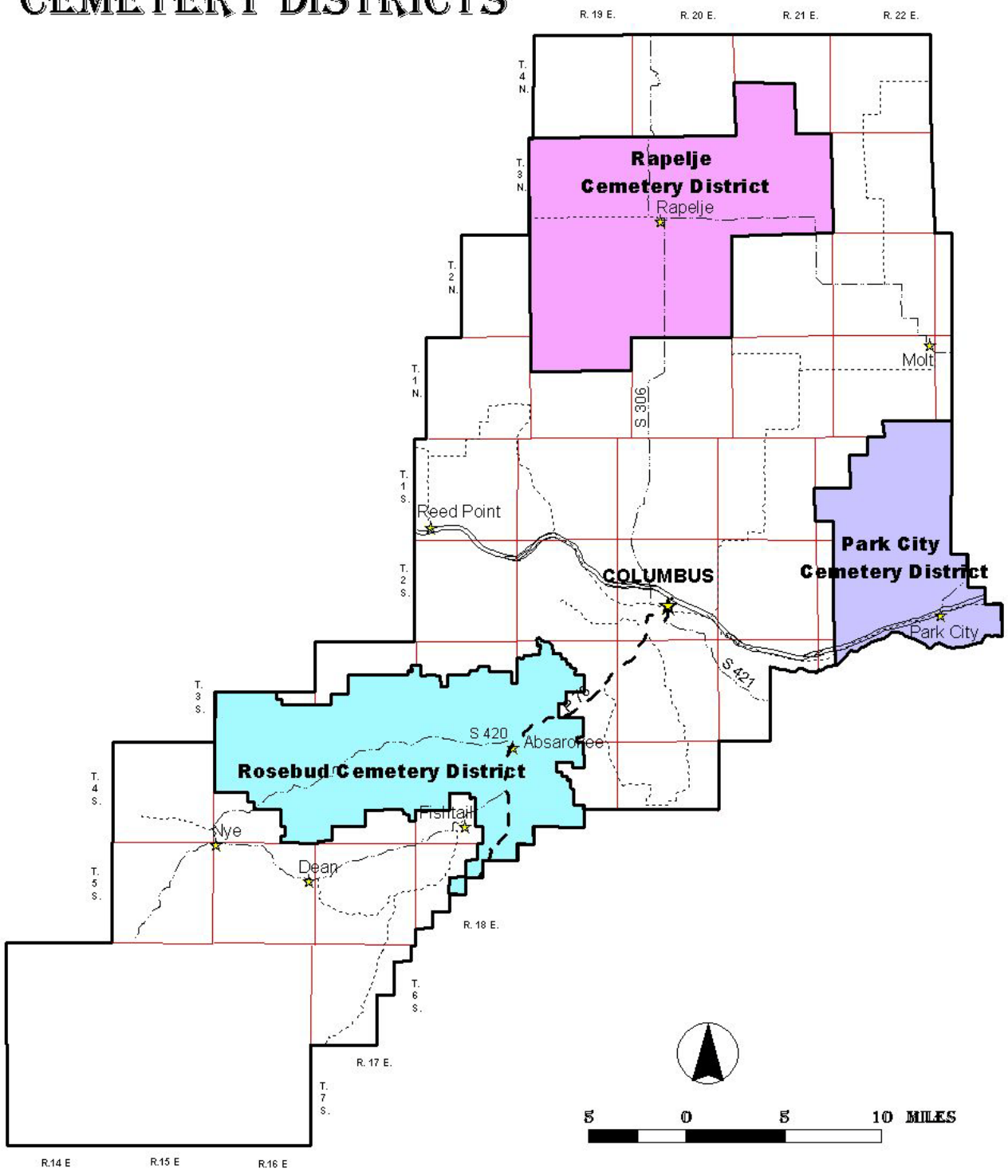
The Rosebud Cemetery District owns three acres south of Absarokee near the intersection of Hwy 78 and Hwy 419. The Nye Cemetery located on Nye Cemetery Road southeast of Nye, is affiliated with the Rosebud Cemetery District.

The Park City Cemetery District owns two sites, one site southwest of Park City and the old Pioneer cemetery, north of Park City.

The Reed Point Cemetery is located west of the county line in Sweet Grass County, south of Interstate 90.

The Rapelje Cemetery is located on Hwy 306 south of town, and is managed informally by members of the Rapelje community.

# STILLWATER COUNTY CEMETERY DISTRICTS



## 5.6 PUBLIC FACILITIES

### INTERSTATE SYSTEM

Interstate 90 is the main east-west route through Stillwater County. This four lane divided highway was completed in 1973 and is maintained by the Montana Department of Transportation. The towns of Columbus, Park City and Reed Point are located along I-90. Each of these communities is served by an interchange. There is another interchange at Springtime, 8 miles west of Columbus, and a Ranch access between Springtime and Reed Point. Average daily traffic on Interstate 90 ranges from under 7,000 near Reed Point to almost 10,000 near Park City. Approximately 20% of the traffic is commercial truck traffic.

### STATE HIGHWAYS

Highway 78, between Columbus and Red Lodge, is a primary highway maintained by Montana Department of Transportation. This is a paved two lane road which serves as the arterial north-south route in southern Stillwater County. This highway also serves as the main street for the Absarokee business district. This route was designated the Donald Ruhl Memorial Highway in 1995 and is scheduled for major reconstruction beginning in 2004. Average daily traffic on Highway 78 ranges from under 800 south of Absarokee to over 3,000 near Columbus. Less than 5% of the traffic is commercial truck traffic.

Highway No. 10 is also an east-west route between Park City and the Springtime Interchange. This highway now serves as a frontage road to I-90 and a minor collector to central Stillwater County. Highway 10 is maintained by the Montana Department of Transportation. This route parallels the Yellowstone River and is a two lane paved road.

Highway 302, east of Molt, is a major collector maintained by the State. This is a paved two lane road, 1.4 miles long and 24 feet wide, which serves Molt and northern Stillwater County.

Highway 306, between Columbus and Rapelje, is maintained by the State. This is a 23.3 mile long, paved 25 feet wide, two lane road. Highway 306 serves as a school bus route and major north-south collector for northern Stillwater County. Average daily traffic on Highway 306 ranges from under 2,000 near Columbus to less than 300 at Rapelje.

Highway 419, between the junction with Highway 78 south of Absarokee and Nye is one of two east-west major collectors in southern Stillwater County which accesses the mining region. This section of highway extends beyond the Stillwater Mine to Woodbine Campground and is 22-28 feet wide and approximately 28 miles long. This is a paved two lane road which also serves as main street for Fishtail, Dean and Nye. Major reconstruction of this route is nearly complete. Average daily traffic on Highway 419 is near 1,000 at the junction with Highway 78.

Highway 420 is the other east-west major collector in southern Stillwater County. The first seven miles of this route west of Absarokee are paved, two lane and maintained by the State. The remaining twelve miles have a gravel surface. This route is becoming increasingly important as access to the mining region in southern Stillwater County. Average daily traffic on Highway 420 at the junction with Highway 78 was 400 vehicles per day in 1999.

Highway 421, between Columbus and Joliet, is a major collector in east-central Stillwater County. This highway is a paved two lane road maintained by the State. Average daily traffic on Highway 421 ranges from under 500 south of Columbus to less than 400 leaving Stillwater County and entering Carbon County.

### COUNTY ROADS - Major Collectors

Two major collectors are maintained by Stillwater County. Major collectors are the more important intra-county travel corridors which serve county seats and larger towns not directly served by arterials.

The Molt-Rapelje Road is a major collector and a bus route. There are five distinct sections to this route. Total length is approximately 23 miles long. A three mile section just east of Rapelje is paved, the rest of the road has a gravel surface and an average width of approximately 24 feet.

The Big Coulee Road is north of the Rapelje Road and is classified as a major collector. This is a dirt road with some gravel on the driving surface, 20 feet wide by 13.3 miles long.

### COUNTY ROADS - Minor Collectors

Minor collectors receive accumulative traffic from local roads, provide service to smaller communities and link locally important traffic generators with the rural areas. Eleven county roads are classified as minor collectors.

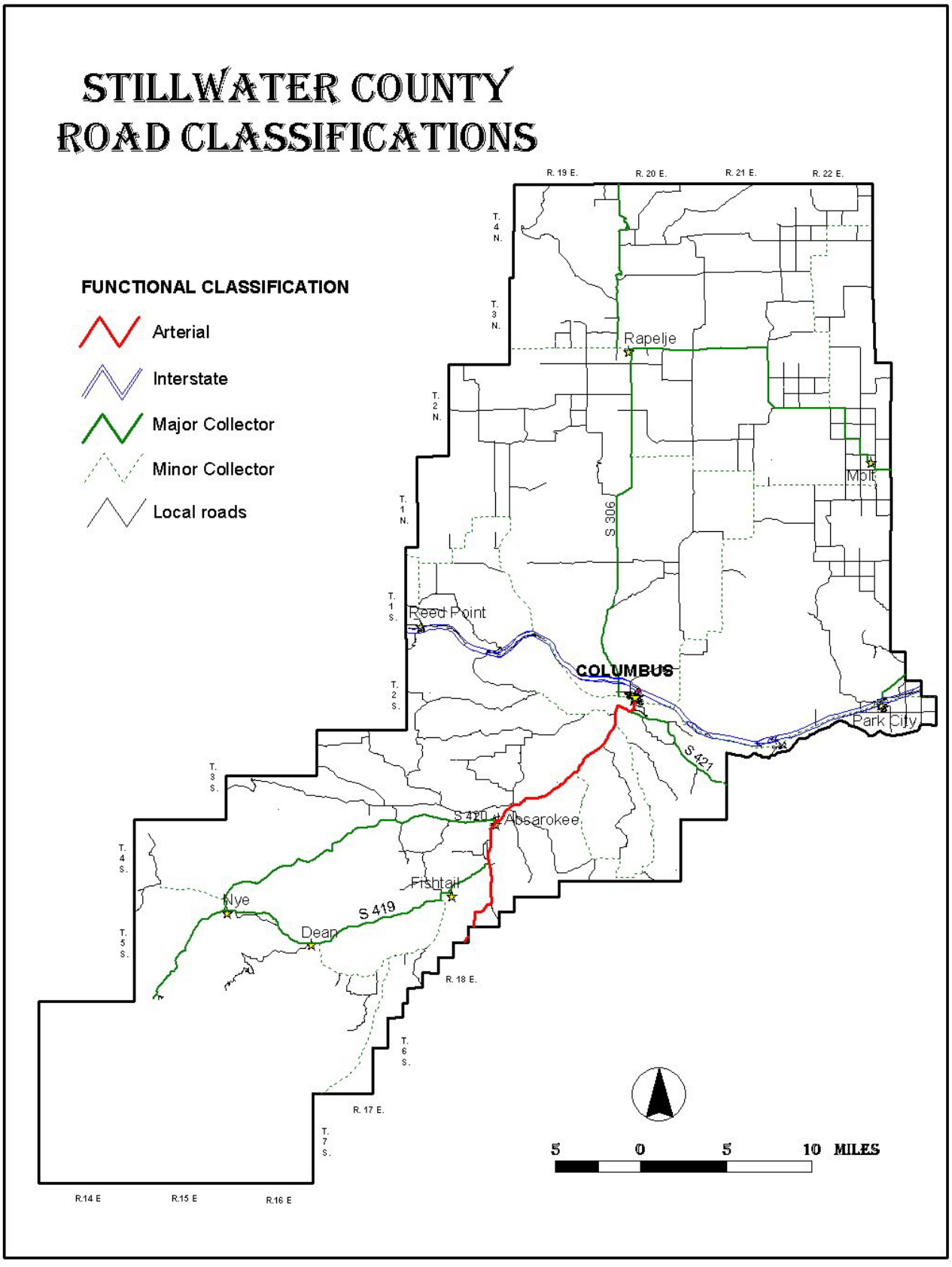
Big Timber Road west of Rapelje is a bus route and connects Rapelje with Big Timber. The section of this road within Stillwater County is 8.15 miles long, 18 to 22 feet wide and has a gravel surface.

Gooseneck - Arnold - Hoagland - Downer Roads form a minor collector connecting Broadview with the Rapelje - Molt Road. This section of road is almost 19 miles long, varies from 20 to 24 feet wide and has a gravel surface. Portions of these roads are bus routes.

Battle Butte - Peterson - Columbus-Molt Roads form an east/west minor collector connecting the Rapelje Road to Molt. This section of road is over 16 miles long, varies in width from 18 to 24 feet and has a gravel surface. Portions of these roads are bus routes. The Columbus - Molt Road is also a graveled minor collector and bus route.

Springtime - Svenson - Trees Roads form another minor collector serving the Reed Point area. This section of road is 20 miles long, varies in width from 19 to 21 feet, has a gravel surface and is a bus route.

Countryman Creek Road is a bus route connecting to Hwy 78 south of Columbus. This road has a gravel surface, is 11.73 miles long and widths varying from 19 to 25 feet. The remainder of the Countryman Creek Road is designated a local road.


STILLWATER COUNTY
ROAD CLASSIFICATIONS
FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION
Arterial
Interstate
Major Collector
Minor Collector
Local roads
R. 19 E.
R. 20 E.
R. 21 E.
R. 22 E.
T. 4 N.
T. 3 N.
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T. 1 N.
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T. 5 S.
T. 6 S.
T. 7 S.
R. 18 E.
R. 17 E.
R.14 E
R.15 E
R.16 E
Rapelje
Molt
S 306
Reed Point
COLUMBUS
Park City
S 421
S 420
Absarokee
Fishtail
Nye
S 419
Dean
5 0 5 10 MILES

Shane Creek Road is also a bus route connecting to Hwy. 78 south of Columbus. The section of this road classified as a minor collector is 5.5 miles long of which 4 miles are paved and the rest has a gravel surface with widths varying from 16 to 24 feet.

Whitebird Creek Road is a bus route connecting to Hwy. 78, which has 2 miles of paved surface and 7.3 miles of gravel surface, the widths varying from 13 to 29 feet.

West Rosebud Road intersects Hwy 419 southwest of Fishtail and serves the Mystic Lake area. This road is 20.5 miles long, of which the first six miles are paved and are part of a bus route. Pavement width is 25-26 feet. The remaining 14.21 miles of this road has a gravel surface and is only 19 feet wide. This route provides access to the Custer National Forest.

Fiddler Creek Road is also a minor collector connecting the West Rosebud Road with the Nye Road. This section of road is 6.84 miles long, 21 feet wide, has a gravel surface and is part of a bus route.

West Fork Road is 4.66 miles long, 20 feet wide, has a graveled surface and is access to the Custer National Forest.

The last 3.32 miles of the Nye Road is also a minor collector. This road is paved, over 24 feet wide and is a main access to the Custer National Forest and Absaroka- Beartooth Wilderness.

## OTHER COUNTY ROADS - Local Roads

There are over one hundred other county roads classified as local roads. There are over 500 miles of local roads which are included in the total of about 800 miles of road maintained by Stillwater County. Approximately 220 miles of local roads are located in the northern part of the county; 100 miles of local roads are in the south end of the county, another 90 miles in the Columbus area, 70 miles around Reed Point and over 50 miles in the Park City area. Most of the local roads are less than the 24 ft. wide standard and have a gravel surface.

## TOWN STREETS

The unincorporated towns of Absarokee, Fishtail, Molt, Nye, Rapelje, Reed Point, and Park City have streets which are the county's maintenance responsibility. Absarokee has over five miles of streets, all paved. Fishtail has .5 mile of streets, of which .2 mile is paved, .1 mile has a gravel surface, and .2 mile is undeveloped. Nye is not a platted town site and the only public road through town is the Nye Road, which is paved. Molt has about 1 mile of streets, of which .1 mile is paved, while .6 mile have a gravel surface, and the rest are undeveloped. Rapelje has over three miles of streets with over a mile paved, about two miles gravel surface and the remainder are undeveloped. Reed Point has over two miles of paved streets plus undeveloped streets. Park City has over seven miles of streets, all are paved. An additional 19 streets were platted, but remain undeveloped. Each town site has additional miles of alleys.

There are also sidewalks in Absarokee, Fishtail, Rapelje, Reed Point, Park City and a short section in Molt. Sidewalks were primarily built to serve businesses, schools, post offices and other public buildings. Sidewalks are not continuous in the residential areas of these unincorporated towns.

## BRIDGES

There are over 30 major bridge structures in the county. The State of Montana maintains the bridge structures on Interstate 90, Highway 10, Rapelje Road 306, Nye Road 419, Stillwater River Road 420 and Joliet Road 421. The Stillwater County Road & Bridge Department is responsible for maintaining bridges on county roads. Over 40 structures are maintained by the county. A few of these have clear span of 20 feet or less. A bridge levy is assessed against property in the county for this purpose. The County also participates in the state off system bridge replacement program and is active in applying for state grant funds for bridge replacement.

The state bridge inspection program includes a list of the major structures, water features crossed, location, type of structure, length, year built and sufficiency rating. The sufficiency rating is indicative of bridge sufficiency to remain in service. A rating of 100 % represents an entirely sufficient bridge and 0% represents an entirely deficient bridge. A rating of 0 to 50% qualifies for replacement and a rating of 50 to 80% qualifies for rehabilitation through Highway Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program funding.

Stillwater County has a proactive bridge improvement program and a long term commitment to capital improvement planning. Bridge standards were formally adopted in 2002 to address bridge demolition and rehabilitation, hydrology, bridge and large culvert design. Many of the smaller wooden bridges are being replaced with culverts. Bridges currently scheduled for replacement include Orser Bridge and Red Bridge.

## ROAD AND BRIDGE OPERATIONS PLAN

Stillwater County Road Department began an inspection and rating program for all county roads in 2002. The County inspects on a two year cycle. The pavement surface evaluation and rating (PACER) program determines the condition of all roads under the County's jurisdiction. A three year Operations Plan is utilized to manage the Stillwater County Road & Bridge Department. Primary sources of funding include property tax levies, gas tax, and other non tax revenues.

## RIGHT OF WAY RECORDS

The right-of-way records on Stillwater County Roads are a mixture of officially declared county roads with documented right-of-way, deeded property, recorded easements and dedicated rights-of-way on subdivision plats. Some county roads are by prescriptive right only based on historical usage. There are other situations where right-of-way records exist for roads which were never built and have no documented historical usage or where physical road locations do not match surveyed rights-of-way.

## FOREST SERVICE ROADS AND TRAILS

There are over 63 miles of forest roads on National Forest Lands within Stillwater County. The forest road system includes Horseman Flat Road 846, Lodgepole Road 2142, Bad Canyon Road 2491, Benbow Road 1414, West Rosebud Road 2072 and Picket Pin Road 2140.

In addition, there are over 50 miles of trails on National Forest Lands within Stillwater County. The trail system includes Stillwater Trail 24, Mystic Lake Trail 19, Phantom Trail 17, Lodgepole Trail 22, Meyers Creek Trail 27, Fishtail Trail 37, Stillwater Plateau Trail 51, Bad Canyon Trail

94, Rabbit Gulch Trail 20 and a portion of Beartrap Trail 95.

## AIRPORT FACILITIES

The Columbus Airport has recently completed a substantial expansion project. A Columbus Airport Master Plan was completed in 1996, a new runway was constructed in 1997-1998, and an additional taxiway was constructed in 2002. The Columbus airport is classified as a secondary facility. There is one 3,800 foot long runway which is 75 feet wide and is paved. This facility is jointly owned by Stillwater County and the Town of Columbus, and is managed by the jointly-appointed Columbus Airport Board. The facility is a general-aviation airport that is lighted and equipped for takeoffs and landings at all times and under all weather conditions. There is no air traffic control facility, but pilots are in radio contact with Montana Flight Control in Great Falls. Fuel is available at the airport, and there is a mechanic on site. Space is leased for private hangars at the airport.

## WATER SYSTEMS

Absarokee and Rapelje presently have central water systems. About 1200 people or around 15 % of the County's population is being served by these Community Water Systems. The remaining people in the planning jurisdictional area are served by individual water systems such as wells, springs or cisterns (Beartooth Resource Conservation & Development, 1995).

Absarokee Water User's Association was a cooperative in which each property owner owned shares. Water supply and treatment has been provided since 1954. Absarokee receives its water supply from a series of 5 active and 3 currently inactive wells. The wells are drilled through a sandstone formation and vary in depth up to 200 feet deep. The existing system of wells is capable of pumping 340,000 gallons per day in the winter months and up to 840,000 gallons during the summer. There is a maximum of 325,000 gallons of storage for treated water in two storage tanks. The original 125,000 gallon concrete storage tank is still in service and another 200,000 gallon concrete tank was constructed in 1981. The water distribution system consists of a series of 4 and 6 inch wrapped steel water mains which are suspected of leaking and have limited capacity for fire protection purposes. The primary need is to replace the smaller water mains with larger pipe and fix the leaks in the distribution system. A Water and Sewer District was created in 1995 which now provides water service.

The Rapelje Water System uses a spring, pump, and 8,000 gallon cistern to supply the unincorporated community of Rapelje, which has a service population of approximately 65 people. The cistern was originally constructed by the railroad in 1917. The water in the Rapelje area is very hard primarily due to the presence of calcium carbonates. The distribution system of 4 and 6 inch diameter lines is adequate for the town at this time. The Rapelje Water System is controlled by a private Water Users Association. Two submersible pumps along with a series of pressure tanks provide "on demand" pressure in the water system.

About 60 % of the total county population is not on public water systems. Their water supply is obtained primarily from ground water sources. Adequate supplies of ground water have been obtained from the alluvial deposits along the river valley of the Rosebud, Stillwater, and Yellowstone rivers in the southern half of Stillwater County. The depth and flow volume in these wells vary significantly. Concerns have been expressed about the increasing development and subdivision activity within these areas and the possibility of detrimental affects on water

supplied by these aquifers.
A groundwater study conducted in 2002 on the west end of Billings, in Yellowstone County to the east, indicated that the biggest affect on the existing Yellowstone River alluvial aquifer in that location has come from the cessation of flood irrigation due to subdivision activity. The primary source of aquifer recharge is halted when irrigated farm land is converted to residential use, and this reduces the quantity of water charging the aquifer, which in some locations has resulted in a 5 foot drop in groundwater level in 20 years. A similar Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology groundwater study of the Yellowstone River Valley in Stillwater County is proposed to be conducted starting in 2005, which will provide information specific to Stillwater County. The ground water supply in northern Stillwater County can be a problem. Judith River Sandstone and Eagle sandstones produce small quantities of water.

## SEWER SYSTEMS

Absarokee, Park City and Reed Point currently have public sewer systems. Over 2000 people or about 25 % of the County's population living in unincorporated areas are being served by these community sewer systems. The remaining people are served by individual septic systems.
The Absarokee sewer system is managed by Stillwater County through two rural special improvement districts (RSID #5 and #7). The existing system is an aerated 3 cell lagoon system of only 1.46 acres. Secondary treatment is also provided at this facility through an ultra-violent light system and seven aerators. This treatment system was upgraded in 1986-1988 and is designed to serve a population of up to 1200 people. The sewage collection system was constructed in 1954 with additions in 1964 and major improvements in 1978. Asbestos cement, clay tile and pvc pipe are all found in the collection system. The primary need at this time is to replace old sewer mains as needed and to acquire additional land for future expansion of the sewage treatment system. The Absarokee wastewater treatment plant was most recently expanded in 1989 to ultimately provide sewer treatment capacity of 864,000 gallons per day. An engineering report completed in 2004 indicates that summer flows are at full capacity, while winter flows are at about 40 % of this capacity. This system discharges into the Rosebud Creek, and is operated by the RSID 5 & 7 manager. The Absarokee Water & Sewer District was created in 1995.

The initial Park City sewage collection and treatment system was constructed in 1968. The system provides service for all areas of town with a network of 8 inch sewer mains with one lift station. The collection system in Park City also contains a variety of pipe including clay and pvc. The Park City sewer treatment plant was most recently expanded in 2002 to increase its capacity to 600,000 gallons per day, which would provide sewer treatment for approximately 1,000 people. It is a tertiary treatment system that ultimately discharges into the Yellowstone River. It is operated by the Park City Water and Sewer District.

The Reed Point Water and Sewer District was formed in late 1992. The district constructed a sewer system in 1995 with federal and state grants and loans to treat up to 13,000 gallons per day, which would provide sewer treatment for approximately 130 people. Sewer facilities include 8 inch, gravity flow collection system of pvc pipe, which flows into a dual pump lift station. Effluent is pumped to a two cell facultative treatment pond equipped with aerators. The two lagoon cells are three acres in size, poly lined, and non-discharging. Treated effluent is discharged by center pivot spray irrigation on an adjacent hay field. The hay field is privately owned, but the district has an 18 acre irrigation easement. It is operated by the Reed Point Water

and Sewer District. The district has recently discussed the steps necessary to expand this system to increase its capacity.

## SOLID WASTE

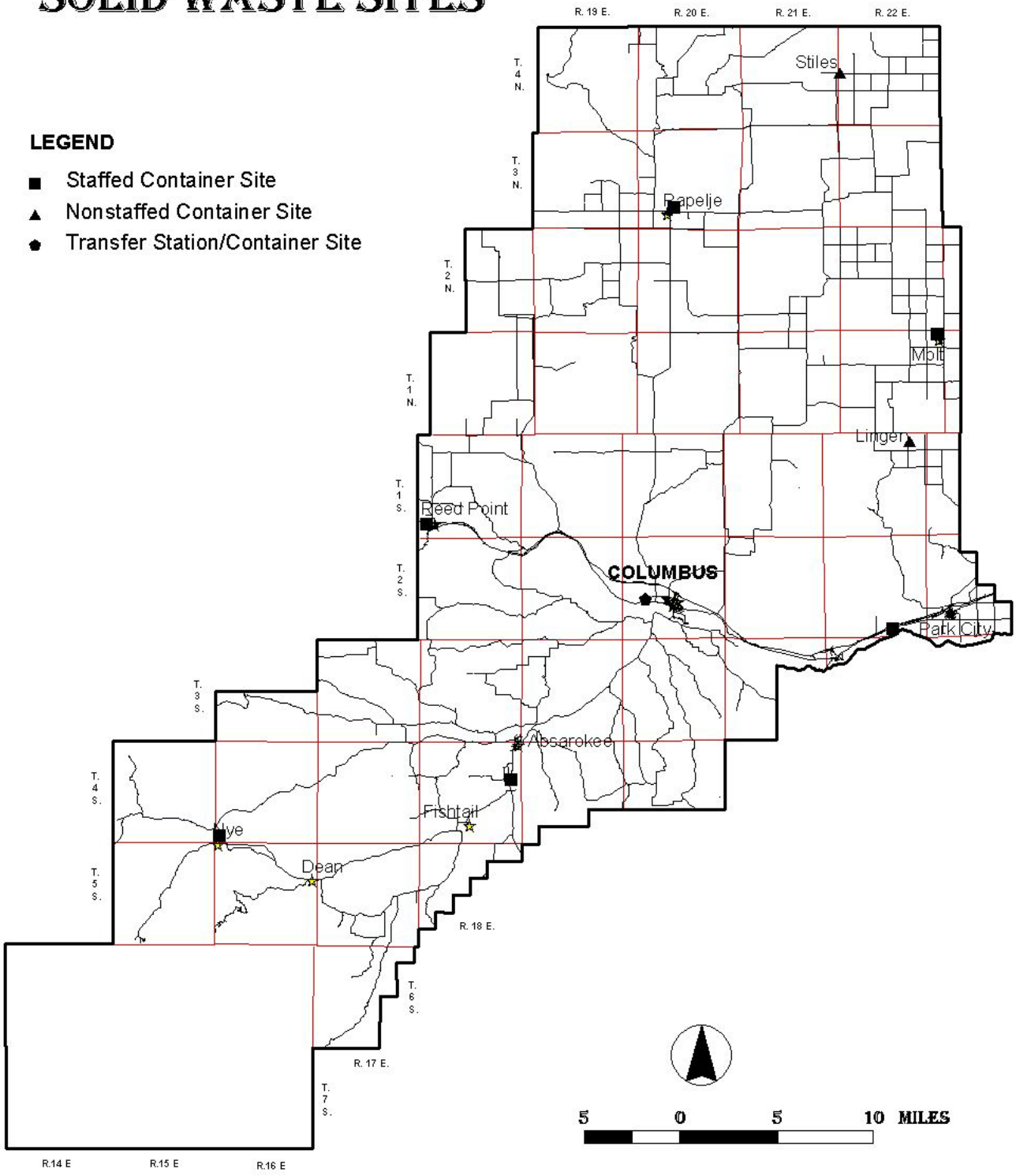
Stillwater County formed a refuse disposal district in 1975. The district is governed by an appointed board of directors. The membership of this board is county-wide with members being from Absarokee, Nye, Park City, Reed Point, Molt, Rapelje and Columbus rural. Members are appointed to three year terms by the Board of County Commissioners. The district changed from 64 unattended collection sites throughout the county to a transfer station near Columbus and seven attended sites located south of Absarokee, north of Nye, west of Park City, west of Reed Point, and near Rapelje, plus two unattended sites in the Molt and Broadview areas. The following map shows the location of these sites.

The district operates a collection system which utilizes 28 and 40 yard roll-off boxes which are picked up by two hook frame assembly trucks. The solid waste collected is compacted in three locations; the main transfer station in Columbus as well as at Absarokee and Park City. The compacted waste from Absarokee and Park City is hauled directly to the Billings landfill. All other uncompacted solid waste is hauled to Columbus where it is compacted and then hauled to Billings. This landfill is operated by the City of Billings and the district pays tipping fees at the landfill per ton of compacted waste. Approximately 5,000 tons are transported to Billings annually.

Recycling bins are currently available in Park City, Absarokee and Nye with plans to have these bins available at all attended sites. Cardboard is collected in separate bins, transported to Columbus where it is recycled. The district employs a full-time Solid Waste Supervisor, one full-time driver, one part-time driver, one full-time secretary, eight part-time site attendants and three roving site attendants.

The Stillwater County Solid Waste District is a countywide district established in 1975 to eliminate the need for county landfills, as well as to facilitate the prohibition of private trash burning in the county. A solid waste assessment charged per year per household funds the Solid Waste District. There is no charge to county residents that live outside the Town of Columbus, for disposing of household trash at the collection points or transfer station.

# STILLWATER COUNTY SOLID WASTE SITES



Public comment received by the Planning Board indicated that a need exists to better inform County residents of options for disposing of hazardous type wastes. The Planning Board felt that proposed objective 3.5.2.7 contained in Chapter 3 of this document satisfactorily addresses the concerns expressed by the public regarding disposal of hazardous waste, but rather improved implementation of that objective is desirable.

## SCHOOL FACILITIES

Each school district owns property for the school grounds, athletic fields, bus garages, teacher's residences or other school purposes. The Absarokee Districts own almost 17 acres at three locations for the high school, elementary school and an athletic field. The new high school/middle school was built in 1989. The average enrollment is around 120 high school students and 50 middle school students. The elementary school was built in 1938 and remodeled in 1954. This building is currently used for grades K through 6$^{th}$. Average enrollment is around 185 students. The old cobblestone school was built around 1910 and is currently used as a community center.

The Fishtail School District #13 owns one acre for the elementary school site with an enrollment around 20 students. Molt School District #12 owns one site for the school which is over two acres in size for grades K through 8$^{th}$ with an enrollment of around 10 students. Nye School District #31 owns approximately six acres for the elementary school site for grades K through 8$^{th}$ with an enrollment around 8 students.

Park City School District #5 owns about 10 acres on several properties used for the school building, parking lot, athletic field, shop, library, bus garages, a park and other school purposes. Park City elementary enrollment averages about 175 students, 7$^{th}$ to 8$^{th}$ grades about 50 students and high school about 80 students. Rapelje School District #32 owns about nine acres in total for the school grounds, athletic field and several teacher residences. Rapelje elementary enrollment averages about 40 students, 7$^{th}$ to 8$^{th}$ grades about 30 students and high school about 25 students. Reed Point School District #9 owns over five acres at two locations for the high school, and elementary school. Reed Point elementary enrollment averages about 54 students, 7$^{th}$ to 8$^{th}$ grades about 20 students and high school about 42 students. Reed Point has purchased ground for a football field.

The Columbus schools are located in the Town of Columbus. The elementary school site consists of approximately 2 acres. About 50% of the grounds are occupied by buildings which include twelve classrooms constructed in 1970, and a gymnasium and 3 class rooms constructed in 1989. The remaining grounds are used for recess and play consisting of 6 basketball goals located on a 5000 sq. ft. concrete playing surface, a sand surface open play area, and various pieces of playground equipment.

The Columbus High School/Middle School facilities comprise approximately 13.3 acres. Five acres of the grounds are occupied by buildings and parking area. The buildings consist of a two story section which was constructed in the mid 1950's along with the gymnasium. The cafeteria and administrative offices were added in 1968. A science room and six new classrooms were

added in 1989. A new gym, middle school and additional classrooms were constructed 1999-2000.

The remaining 8 acres of the high school grounds are occupied by a lighted football field, running track, and other open areas used as athletic playing fields by school students and the community baseball program. The football field is irrigated with water pumped out of the Columbus Water Users Association Ditch. The pump station and intake are located at the north end of Quarry Road and water is piped a half mile south to the school grounds. Automatic irrigation lines are used to sprinkle the field.

## MEDICAL FACILITIES

The Stillwater Community Hospital building is owned by the County and is leased to the Stillwater Hospital Association, Inc. The main wing fronting on 4th Avenue North was built in 1952, with the east wing being added in 1970. The hospital contains 13 short term and 10 long term beds, an emergency room, laboratory, physical therapy, nursery facilities and expanded outpatient services. Remodeling completed in 1992 included a large scale fire alarm and sprinkling system improvements as well as other room improvements. Twenty one units for assisted living were added to the hospital between1986 and 2000, an ambulance garage was added in 1994 and a day care facility was started in 1995. Additional public health services available through the hospital include public nursing service for the school nursing program, plus immunizations, nutrition supplement and education for women, infants and children (WIC).

The hospital currently has 75 full and part time employees including seven registered nurses, four LPN's, three lab technicians and one radiology technician. There are currently three local family practice physicians and a nurse practitioner serving the community. The physicians are independent of the hospital; however, all have staff privileges at the hospital. An additional ten specialists also visit the hospital as needed.

The sources of revenue for the hospital consist of fees for the services provided, plus some funding from Stillwater County for maintenance and public health , the Copulos Trust and other endowments. The trust consists of $1,000,000.00, the terms of which allow the hospital to use interest earned for capital expenses. The Copulos Trust has played a significant role in allowing the hospital to obtain new medical technologies.

The Columbus Branch of the Deaconess Billings Clinic is located directly across the street from the hospital. The Stillwater Hospital Association owns the clinic building and also an adjacent building which houses Family Services. The clinic offers independent medical care from that provided by the hospital. The clinic employs 2 of the 3 local physicians and a nurse practitioner. Additional staff includes 3 LPN's and 3 office workers.

The Absarokee Medical Clinic provides urgent care, outpatient medicine, x-ray and lab services. The clinic is currently served by one physician, one RN, a technician, and office help. The new building was constructed in 1997 in association with St. Vincent Hospital of Billings with medical specialist visits as needed.

The Beartooth Manor is a convalescent center located in Columbus but serves the entire county. This 82 bed facility is privately owned and offers care for all ages. Approximately seventy

people are employed at the convalescent center including RN's and LPN's. Other employees consist of administration, nurse's aides, kitchen help, housekeepers, workers helping the developmentally disabled and activity directors. Physical therapy and home health care services are also provided.

## PARKS AND RECREATION

There are a variety of recreational opportunities in Stillwater County (see map 16). The Custer National Forest includes land in southern Stillwater County which offers recreational opportunities ranging from primitive to motorized. Primitive recreational opportunities are available in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness Area. There are two major wilderness portals in Stillwater County, the West Rosebud trail and Main Stillwater trail. Over 10,000 visitors have been counted in one year at these portals. There are three developed Forest Service campgrounds within Stillwater County including Woodbine, Emerald Lake and Pine Grove Campgrounds. These campgrounds have a combined capacity of 123 units which are accessible by car. A variety of dispersed recreational opportunities are available on the Custer National Forest including hunting, hiking, fishing, backpacking, x-country skiing, mountain climbing, horseback riding, and other outdoor recreation opportunities.

In addition to national forest lands in Stillwater County, there are several tracts of Bureau of Land Management land, State owned property scattered through the county and two National Wildlife refuges in northern Stillwater County. Halfbreed Lake and Hailstone national wildlife refuges are managed by the National Fish and Wildlife Service. Hunting and fishing activities are managed by Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks within the county. Fishing access sites include Indian Fort north of Reed Point and Buffalo Mirage (Sportsman Park) southeast of Park City on the Yellowstone River; Fireman's Point, Swinging Bridge, White Bird, Absaroka, Cliff Swallow, Castle Rock, Moraine, and Buffalo Jump on the Stillwater River; and Rosebud Isle on West Rosebud Creek near Fishtail.

Additional recreational opportunities are available in local community parks. Absarokee has three community parks. Hawkins Park is located on Willow Street, two blocks from State Highway 78. This park is less than 1.4 acres in size and contains two tennis courts, picnic facilities, skateboard area and access to Rosebud Creek. Absarokee Pool site is 1.23 acres in size located off Grove Street and has a swimming pool (reconstructed in 1986), two horseshoe courts and picnic facilities. Maintenance is provided by the Beartooth Park District. The Absarokee ball field consists of 5.0 acres gifted to the County in 1986 and 2001. Located one mile west of Absarokee, it is presently operated and maintained by the Absarokee Little League baseball club. On-site improvements include a ball field, backstop, and bleachers. There is also a 21.5 acre private park west of Absarokee in the Circle T Subdivision.

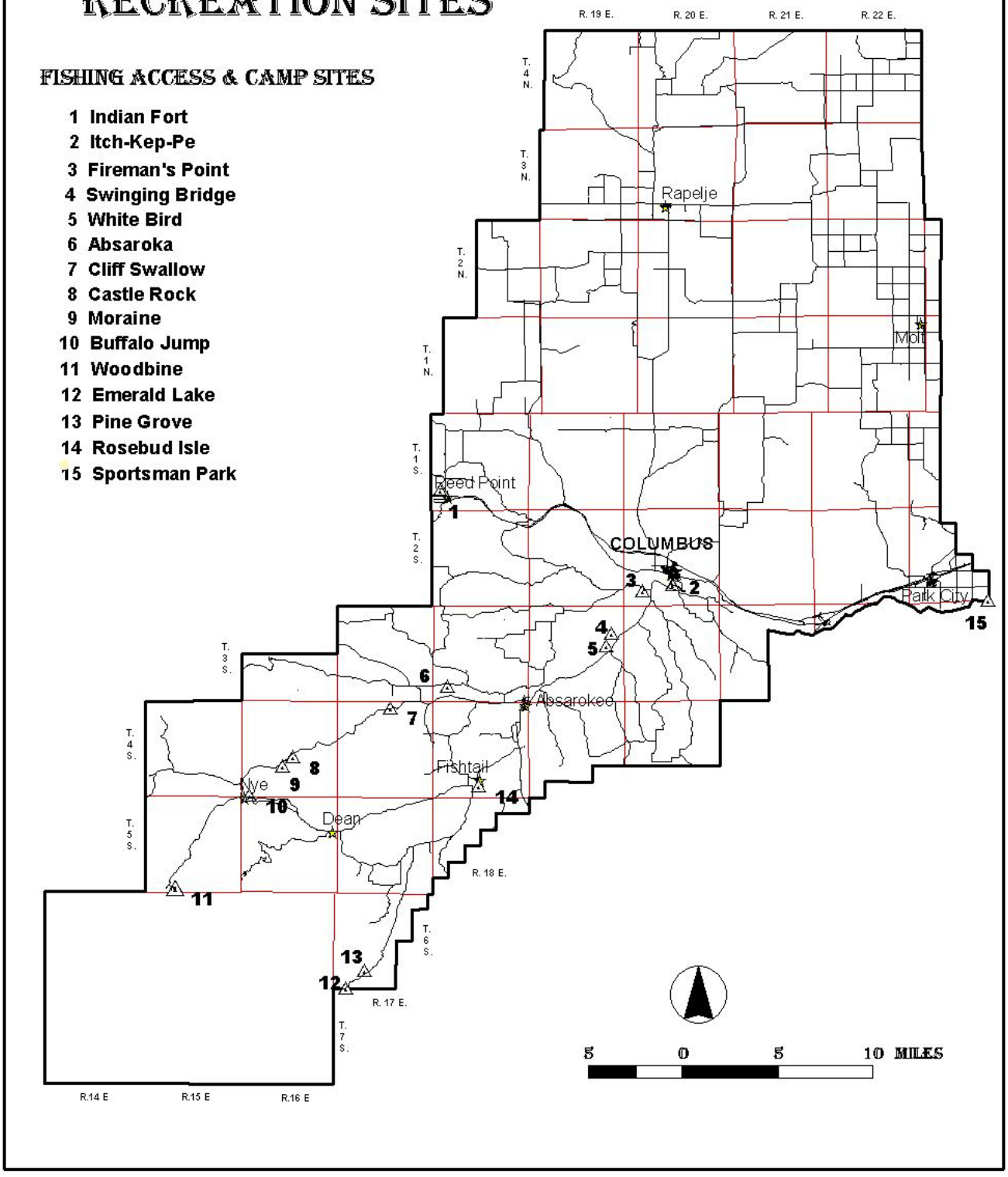
Community parks are also located in the unincorporated communities of Fishtail, Reed Point, and Rapelje. The site of the Fishtail Family Fun Park was acquired by the Fishtail Community Center in the 1990s, and has been improved and landscaped using grant monies and local contributions. The Rapelje Town Park is maintained by the Rapelje Community Foundation using local volunteers. Park City has a 1.4 acre park located north of the interstate exit with large shade trees and picnic tables. The platted Town of Rapelje has a total of 8.3 acres of parkland in five dedicated parks in town but only one has been developed with a picnic shelter and horseshoe court. The Reed Point Park was purchased by the Reed Point Community Club

with donated funds and money raised by the annual Sheep Drive.

The County also has a park fund containing cash-in-lieu of parkland funds paid when a new subdivision plat is approved. The funds are allocated for park improvements in the communities near the location of a new subdivision. A total of $24,104.87 has been deposited in the fund since 1973 when the current subdivision and platting act was enacted. As of this writing the fund contains $11,939.07 available for park purposes.

The Beartooth Park District has recently been created in southern Stillwater County by public election and a board of directors was appointed. The park sites in Absarokee will be maintained by the park district. Future funding for the maintenance and repair of the Absarokee swimming pool was a major concern leading to the formation of the Park District.

# STILLWATER COUNTY RECREATION SITES



# 5.7 NATURAL RESOURCES

## CLIMATE

Stillwater County is located in a climatic region described as semiarid, which is characterized by colder temperatures. The general weather of the area consists of cold, dry winters; cool, moist springs; hot, moderately dry summers; and cool, dry autumns.

The climatic data summary provides mean monthly precipitation and temperature data. Mean annual precipitation ranges from 12-14 inches in the Yellowstone River valley and northern Stillwater County, 14-20 inches in the Stillwater River valley and foothills, and 20 to >70 inches in the Beartooth Mountains. Nearly all precipitation in the winter is snowfall. Snowfall is estimated to reach accumulated totals over two hundred inches in the mountains and less than 30 inches in the lower elevations. The runoff from melting mountain snowpack during the spring and early summer combined with heavy rains causes occasional flooding of some streams and rivers.

Stillwater County is located in a belt of westerly winds. The mountains of the Pacific Northwest and the Rockies receive most of the moisture before it reaches here. This predominately westerly flow changes in the spring months. This allows for intrusions of moist air from the Gulf of Mexico brought in by an easterly flow. April, May and June precipitation accounts for nearly 50% of the annual average. The information available on humidity for this area indicates mid day relative humidity averages around 30% in summer and over 50% in winter. Winds are predominately from the west. Available wind information indicates mean wind speed is around 10 mph. However, wind gusts in excess of 60 mph occur. Severe storms are not common; however, thunderstorms, hailstorms, high winds, heavy snow, freezing rain and sleet do occur.

Average monthly temperatures in Stillwater County range from over 60 degrees F in the summer to around 20 degrees F in the winter. Daily temperatures can vary substantially, summer high temperatures can exceed 100 degrees F while arctic air in winter can lower temperatures below -30 degrees F. Temperature can also change very rapidly; "Chinook" winds can raise winter temperatures 40 to 50 degrees within a day. Elevation and aspect also play a role in temperature patterns. The number of frost free days ranges from less than 50 days in the mountains to over 130 days in the Yellowstone River valley.

The air quality in Stillwater County is considered to be excellent. The County is designated a Class II air shed for purposes of determining available ambient air quality increments. There are no known violations of Ambient Air Quality Standards in Stillwater County at this time.

## GEOLOGY

The geology of Stillwater County includes rock units that are as old as 2.7 billion years and as recent as present-day. Within this geologic time span, many layers of sedimentary and volcanic rocks were deposited and bodies of igneous rocks were placed. The dynamic earth pressures that shift continents and build mountains brought deeply buried rocks to the surface, exposing them

to weathering and erosion. What is evident today in Stillwater County are the remnants of many cycles of emplacement or deposition and erosion.

The ages of the rocks generally progress from the oldest, in the southern part of the county, to most-recent, in the northern part and along stream valleys. In the vicinity of the Beartooth Mountains, flat-lying, younger Paleozoic and Mesozoic sediments that once covered the entire region were thrust upward during the end of the Mesozoic era. This uplift exposed the oldest Precambrian rocks at the core of the mountains and resulted in the deposition of Late Cretaceous and Tertiary sediments along the north and east flanks. At this time, volcanic lava and ash flows erupted along the mountain front as well. During and after mountain building, stream action carved channels through the younger strata and deposited sand, silt, and gravel in the valley bottoms. Glaciers covered the Beartooth Range until recently. Glacial action helped sculpt the present-day landscape by scouring the highlands and depositing the sediment along the mountain front. The youngest deposits present are accumulating in active stream channels like the Stillwater and Yellowstone Rivers.

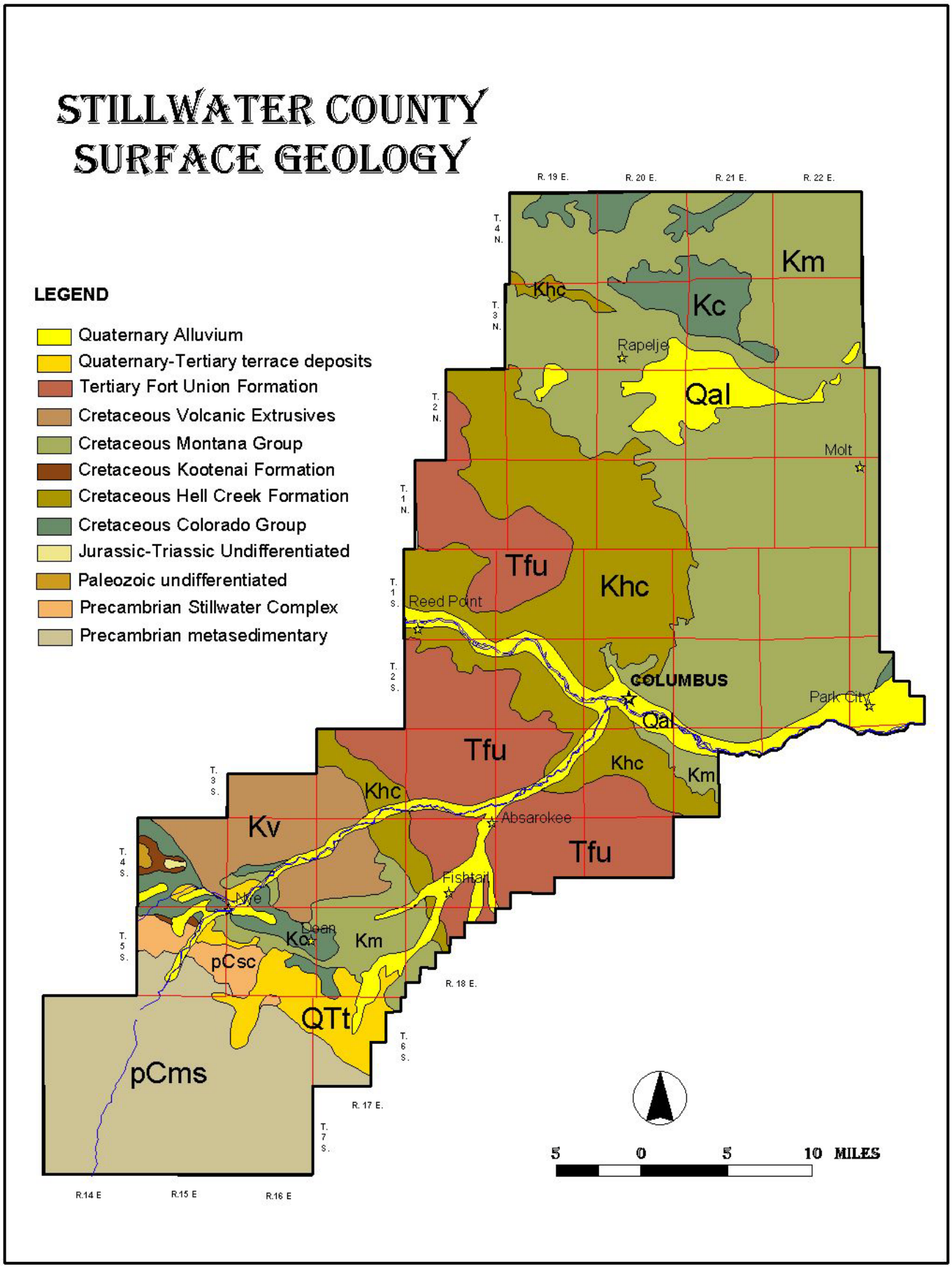
The geologic units present in Stillwater County can be divided into six age groups. From youngest to oldest they include; 1) Quaternary valley fill and glacial sediments, 2) Tertiary sediments and volcanic intrusive, 3) Cretaceous sediments and volcanic extrusive, 4) Triassic/Jurassic undifferentiated sediments, 5) Paleozoic undifferentiated sediments, and 6) Precambrian intrusive and metamorphic rocks. These age groups are further subdivided into distinct units that are shown on the accompanying geologic map.

The Quaternary sediments (Qal) are predominately unconsolidated clay, sand, silt, and gravel deposited by stream action (alluvial) or glaciation. Glacial deposits are found on the surface of high terraces flanking the Beartooth Mountains and in mountain valleys. Alluvial deposits are present in all major river valleys and lake basins.

Underlying a thin veneer of glacial out-wash are thick deposits of stratified silt, sand, and gravel (QTt) that comprise the high terraces of the Beartooth foothills. These sediments were derived from the Beartooth Mountains and accumulated during the late Tertiary period. The Fort Union formation (Tfu), composed of inter-bedded shale and sandstone units, was deposited during the early Tertiary and contains a few lignitic coal beds. The sediments often form cliffs and steep bluffs along Rosebud Creek and the Stillwater River between Nye and Columbus.

Small intrusive (Ti) of felsic and intermediate composition outcrop near Limestone in the southern part of the county. These intrusive do not appear related to the thick deposits of volcanic extrusive located north of Limestone. These tuffs and tufaceous sandstones were determined to be upper Cretaceous in age (Kv).

The Hell Creek formation (Khc) is also mapped as upper Cretaceous and occurs throughout the county. The formation is recognized by alternating beds of greenish gray siltstone and gray-brown sandstone. It may locally contain limestone beds and ironstone concretions. Sandstone outcrops along the Yellowstone River between Reed Point and Columbus belong to the Hell Creek formation.


STILLWATER COUNTY
SURFACE GEOLOGY
LEGEND
Quaternary Alluvium
Quaternary-Tertiary terrace deposits
Tertiary Fort Union Formation
Cretaceous Volcanic Extrusives
Cretaceous Montana Group
Cretaceous Kootenai Formation
Cretaceous Hell Creek Formation
Cretaceous Colorado Group
Jurassic-Triassic Undifferentiated
Paleozoic undifferentiated
Precambrian Stillwater Complex
Precambrian metasedimentary
R. 19 E.
R. 20 E.
R. 21 E.
R. 22 E.
T. 4 N.
T. 3 N.
T. 2 N.
T. 1 N.
T. 1 S.
T. 2 S.
T. 3 S.
T. 4 S.
T. 5 S.
T. 6 S.
T. 7 S.
R. 18 E.
R. 17 E.
R.14 E
R.15 E
R.16 E
Km
Khc
Kc
Rapelje
Qal
Molt
Tfu
Khc
Reed Point
COLUMBUS
Park City
Qal
Tfu
Khc
Km
Khc
Absarokee
Kv
Tfu
Fishtail
Nye
Dean
Kc
Km
pCsc
QTt
pCms
5 0 5 10 MILES

Other units deposited during the upper Cretaceous include the Bearpaw shale, Judith River formation, Claggett formation, Eagle sandstone, and Telegraph Creek formation. These units are collectively called the Montana Group (Km) and outcrop mostly in the north part of the county. The dominant rock types are shale and sandstone. Many units contain bentonite and lignitic coal beds. The sandstone beds are usually massive and often form high cliffs and bluffs. The Eagle sandstone that outcrops in the north and south part of the county is usually associated with the cliffs and rimrocks of the Billings area.

The lower Cretaceous period is represented by the Colorado Group (Kc) which is comprised of the Mowry and Thermopolis shale formations and the Cloverly sandstone. The shale formations outcrop in a small area near Nye and are predominately shale with inter-bedded siltstone and fine-grained sandstone. Bentonite beds are common and shale members are known to contain fish scales, bones, and teeth. The sandstone member of the Cloverly formation is a known oil and gas bearing unit.

The undifferentiated sediments of the Jurassic-Triassic (JTr) periods overlie the Paleozoic sediments (Pal). This sequence of strata was rotated vertically during the uplift of the Beartooth range and is well exposed on the north flanks of the mountains. The Mesozoic strata are composed of inter-bedded medium-grained sandstone and shale. Some units are red sandstone and shales, typical of this period. The Paleozoic sediments present in this area include the Phosphoric formation, Quadrant sandstone, Amsden formation, Madison limestone, Three Forks shale, Jefferson limestone and Bighorn dolomite. The community of Limestone was named for a nearby bluff composed of thick, white to light gray Madison limestone. The Cambrian age formations have not been mapped as distinct units. The Paleozoic sediments overlie the Stillwater Complex to the south.

The Stillwater Complex (pCsc) is a Late Archean, mafic to ultra mafic, layered intrusion situated on the north edge of the Beartooth Mountains. The complex was tilted and subsequently exposed during the uplift of the Beartooth Mountains during the late Cretaceous. Layering of the complex was due to the growth and precipitation of minerals in ferromagnesian-rich magma. The accumulation of certain minerals forms the basis for identifiable map units within the complex. In cross-section, the complex is approximately 3.3 miles thick and extends over a strike distance of 28 miles. The basal unit of the complex is in contact with older metasedimentary rocks that comprise the core of the Beartooth Mountains.

## MINERAL RESOURCES

### SAND AND GRAVEL

Sand and gravel have been mined for road and concrete aggregate throughout the county. Alluvium found in stream valley and glacial out-washes from foothill terraces near Fishtail and Nye have been a consistent source of aggregate. Sand and gravel have been mined from the lake basin deposits in the north part of the county around Big Lake. Some more-resistant sandstone units have also been processed for aggregate. These units include the Fort Union formation, Hell Creek formation and some sandstone members of the Montana Group.

### BENTONITE

Many Cretaceous shales may contain mineable bentonite beds although none are currently producing.

### BUILDING STONE

Sandstone from the Hell Creek formation was quarried near Columbus. The sandstone is considered to have excellent bearing strength and resists weathering. No current production is reported.

## COAL

The only reported coal occurrence is located in Section 20, T. 4 S., R. 16 E., near Nye. The Tandy Coal Mine produced sub-bituminous coal from the Cretaceous Eagle sandstone formation, Montana Group. The coal occurs in two beds, ranging between two and six feet thick and has a sulfur content of .5 %, an ash content of 18.1 %, and heating value of 10,130 BTU.

## OIL AND GAS

Several producing oil and gas fields are located in the county. Southeast of Fishtail, between Dean and East Rosebud Creek, oil and gas have been produced from four separate fields: the Dean Dome, Fiddler Creek, Roscoe Dome, and MacKay Dome. Each field lies along the Nye-Bowler Lineament, a series of antic lines and domes which extends for approximately 60 miles along the Beartooth Mountain front. The producing horizons are the lower Cretaceous Greybull sandstone and Lakota sandstone of the Colorado Group. The Dean Dome produced a total of 75,502 barrels of oil as of 1983, Fiddler Creek produced approximately 1,800 barrels, and Roscoe Dome produced approximately 1,672 barrels. No data is available for the MacKay Dome. As of February 1995, there was no production reported and no operating permits pending.

Several gas fields in the north part of the county near Big Coulee, Rapelje, and Big Lake have produced gas from the upper Cretaceous sandstone units of the Montana Group. Production for 1994 in the Big Coulee field was reported to be 151,419 mcf, 301,577 mcf from Six Shooter field west of Rapelje, and 4,275 mcf from Lake Basin. No production was reported in 1994 from the Lake Basin North or Rapelje fields. Stillwater County does have potential coal bed methane resources within its boundaries, however little has occurred in actual development as of late 2004.

## HARD ROCK MINERALS

The Stillwater Complex and local intrusive have been the focus of most mineral development activity. Gold and silver mineralization is associated with Cretaceous and Tertiary hydrothermal vein deposits crosscutting and adjacent to the mafic intrusive. Several types of magmatic ore deposits occur within the complex, including sub-economic resources of copper and nickel-bearing sulfides and chromite, and economic reserves of platinum and palladium-bearing sulfides. The Benbow Mine produced 64,791 tons of concentrate containing 41.5 % chromite and 163,571 tons of ore were mined at the Mountain View property, generating 69,371 tons of concentrate that assayed 38.8 % chromite. Over 900,000 tons of ore were removed from the Mouat Mine, roughly ten million tons, containing 20-22 % chromite, are estimated to remain.

Extensive exploration in the 1970s and 1980s identified the association of platinum group elements (PGE) with the olivine-bearing members known as the J-M Reef. PGE-bearing sulfides occur within a zone that appears to be continuous for most of the 28 mile strike length and averages approximately 0.57 ounces of platinum and palladium per ton. The world class ore body is currently mined by Stillwater Mining Company. In 1995, proven mining reserves were estimated to be 881,000 tons, averaging 0.86 ounces of platinum and palladium per ton. Probable mining reserves may be as high as 22,071,000 tons, averaging .80 ounces per ton.

## GROUND WATER RESOURCES

Hydrologic characteristics vary within stratigraphic units located in Stillwater County. Characteristics range from "not normally an aquifer" to "Good to Excellent aquifers". Some stratigraphic units still have unknown potential. Additional groundwater studies have been proposed for the Yellowstone River valley.

## SOILS

Stillwater County has an interesting mix of soils which has been greatly influenced by the geologic history of the area. Soils in the county are formed from sandstone, shale, limestone and granite rocks, with evidence of mixing of these materials in glacial till. Texture of the soils range from sandy to very clayey. Prime farmland is located in valley bottoms of the Yellowstone River, the Stillwater, and Rosebud Creek. Salts and alkali are evident in the same clay soils.

The soils map is intended to show general soil conditions only. There are nine soil associations which are an initial classification of the different soils in the county. Each association contains a few major and several minor soils in a pattern characteristic to that particular association. Each association is named for the major soil series contained within its boundaries.

### ABSAROKEE-SINNIGAM-CASTNER ASSOCIATION

This soil association is found in two locations south of the Yellowstone River valley in the Countryman Creek and Shane Creek areas of central Stillwater County and comprises about 15% of the county. These soils are dominated by moderately deep and shallow, gently sloping to steep, well drained clay loam and loam soils formed in material weathered from shale and sandstone on upland areas. These soils have been used mainly for range and dryland crops. There are often severe limitations for building site developments due to depth to bedrock, low strength, and shrink-swell problems. There are also severe limitations for sanitary facilities due to slow percolation and depth to bedrock.

### HAVRE-HARLEM-GLENDIVE ASSOCIATION

This soil association is found in the Yellowstone River valley bottom and north of Park City and represents about 1% of the soils. These soils are dominated by deep, nearly level or gently sloping, well drained, light colored loam, sandy loam formed in alluvium of flood plains, alluvial fans and terraces. These soils are suitable for wildlife habitat, range, dryland and irrigated crops. There are often severe limitations for building site developments because of flooding, shrink-swell and low strength problems. They also have slight to severe limitations for sanitary

facilities because of floods and slow percolation and depth to bedrock.

### Hilger-Castner-Turner Association

This soil association is located in the southwestern part of the county and represents about 16% of the soils. These soils are deep to shallow, sloping to steep, well drained cobbly sandy loam, loam and clay loam soils formed in material weathered from sandstone and shale in gravelly alluvium terraces. The area consists of hillsides, ridgetops, with broad divides and terraces in uplands. These soils have been used mainly for pasture, range and woodlands. There are moderate to severe limitations for building site developments due to depth to bedrock, low strength, slope, frost and shrink-swell problems. There are also a range of limitations for sanitary facilities from slight to severe due to slope and depth to bedrock.

### Lardell-McKenzie Association

This soil is found in the Big Lake/Wheat Basin area in the north eastern part of the county as shown on the Soil Map. These soils represent around 2% of the soils and are deep, nearly level, poorly drained clay loam and clay soils formed in flood plains, alluvium of closed basins, and terraces. These soils are used mainly for range and dryland crops. Severe limitations exist in these soils for building site development and sanitary facilities because of flooding and wetness.

### Lolo-Shauna-Nesda Association

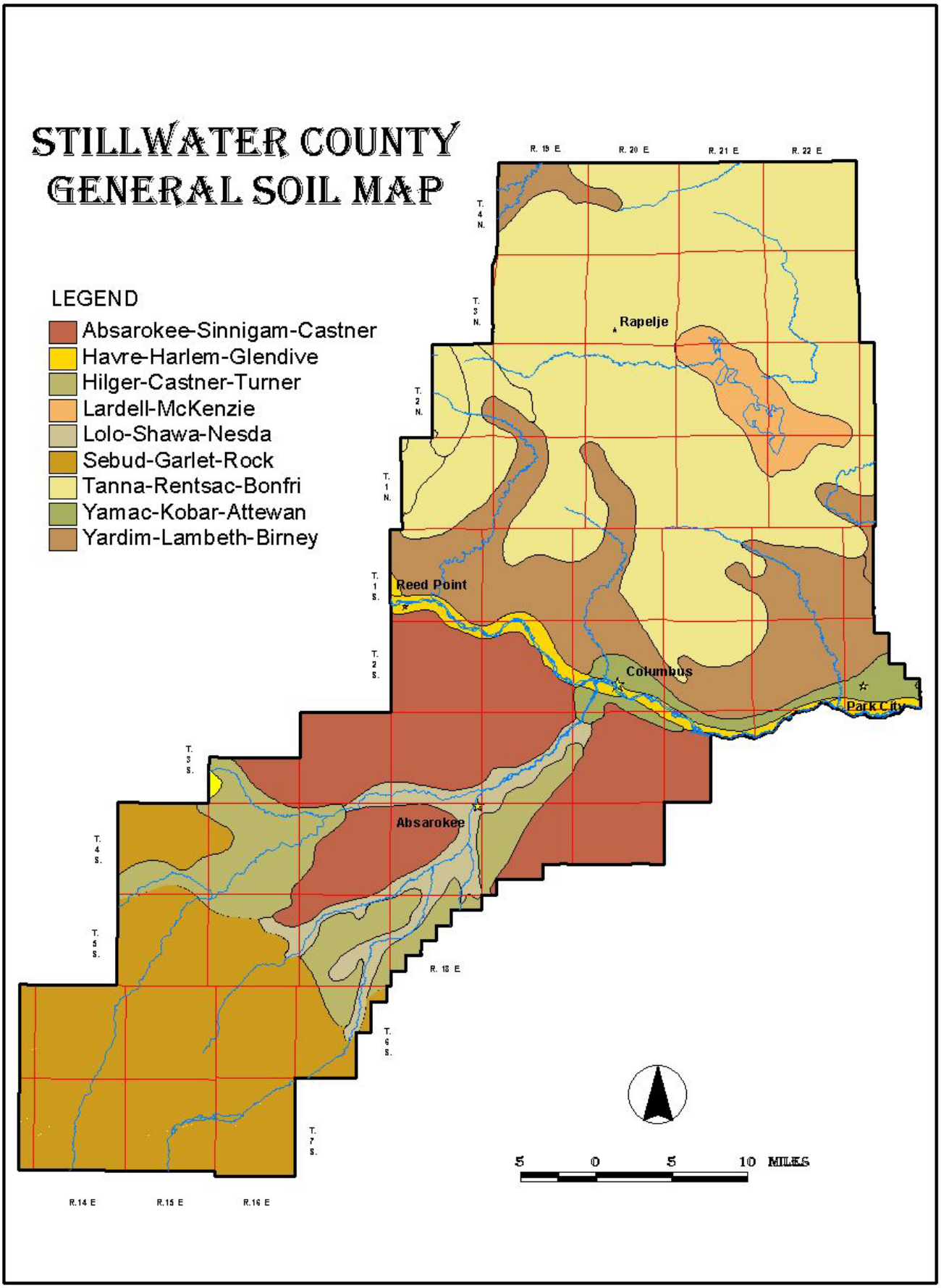
This association is found in the Stillwater River, Rosebud and Fishtail Creek valley bottoms which comprise around 2% of the soils. These soils are deep, nearly level to moderately sloping, well drained gravelly loam and silty loam soils formed in alluvium of flood plains and terraces, and alluvial fans. These soils are mainly used for range and irrigated hay land. Slight to severe limitations may exist for building site developments due to floods, wetness, low strength or shrink-swell problems. Severe limitations may also exist for sanitary facilities where flooding and high ground water are problems.

### Sebud-Garlet-Rock Outcrop Association

This association is found in the extreme southern portion of the county, mostly within the forest boundary. These soils are dominated by deep, moderately sloping to very steep, well drained, stony loam and gravelly sandy loam soils and rock outcrops. These soils formed in materials weathered from sandstone, igneous rock and glacial till in foothills, mountain slopes, and ridgetops. These soils have been used mainly for woodland, recreation, watershed, and wildlife. There are severe limitations for building site developments and sanitary facilities due to depth to bedrock, low strength, slope and shrink-swell problems.

### Tanna-Rentsac-Bonfri Association

This soil association is found over a large area of the Northern portion of the county and represents over 40% of the soils. These soils are dominated by moderately deep or shallow soils, gently sloping to moderately steep, well drained clay loam and loam soils formed in material weathered from sandstone and shale, on upland areas. These soils have been used mainly for range and dryland crops. There are often severe limitations for building site developments due to depth to bedrock, low strength, slope, and shrink-swell problems. There are also severe limitations for sanitary facilities due to slow percolation and depth to bedrock.


STILLWATER COUNTY
GENERAL SOIL MAP
LEGEND
Absarokee-Sinnigam-Castner
Havre-Harlem-Glendive
Hilger-Castner-Turner
Lardell-McKenzie
Lolo-Shawa-Nesda
Sebud-Garlet-Rock
Tanna-Rentsac-Bonfri
Yamac-Kobar-Attewan
Yardim-Lambeth-Birney
R. 19 E
R. 20 E
R. 21 E
R. 22 E
T. 4 N.
T. 3 N.
T. 2 N.
T. 1 N.
T. 1 S.
T. 2 S.
T. 3 S.
T. 4 S.
T. 5 S.
T. 6 S.
T. 7 S.
R. 18 E
R.14 E
R.15 E
R.16 E
Rapelje
Reed Point
Columbus
Park City
Absarokee
5 0 5 10 MILES

### YAMAC-KOBAR-ATTEWAN ASSOCIATION

An area along both sides of the Yellowstone River between Columbus and Park City is dominated by this soil type and represents about 4% of the soils. These soils are deep, nearly level to moderately sloping, well drained loam and clay loam soils formed in alluvial fans and terraces. Moderate to severe limitations exist in these soils for building site developments primarily due to shrink swell and low strength problems. Some moderate to severe conditions may also be encountered for sanitary facilities due to high ground water and slow percolation.

### YAWDIM-LABETH-BIRNEY ASSOCIATION

This soil association is found in the north-western portion of the county north of the Yellowstone River valley in the White Beaver, Keyser Creek, Valley Creek, and Canyon Creek drainages and represents 14% of the soils. These soils are dominated by shallow to deep, moderately steep to very steep, well drained clay loam and channery loam soils formed in material weathered from shale on uplands. These soils are mainly used for range and to a lesser extent woodlands. There are moderate to severe limitations for building site developments due to slopes, shrink-swell and low strength problems. Severe limitations may also be encountered due to slope, depth to rock, and slow percolation.

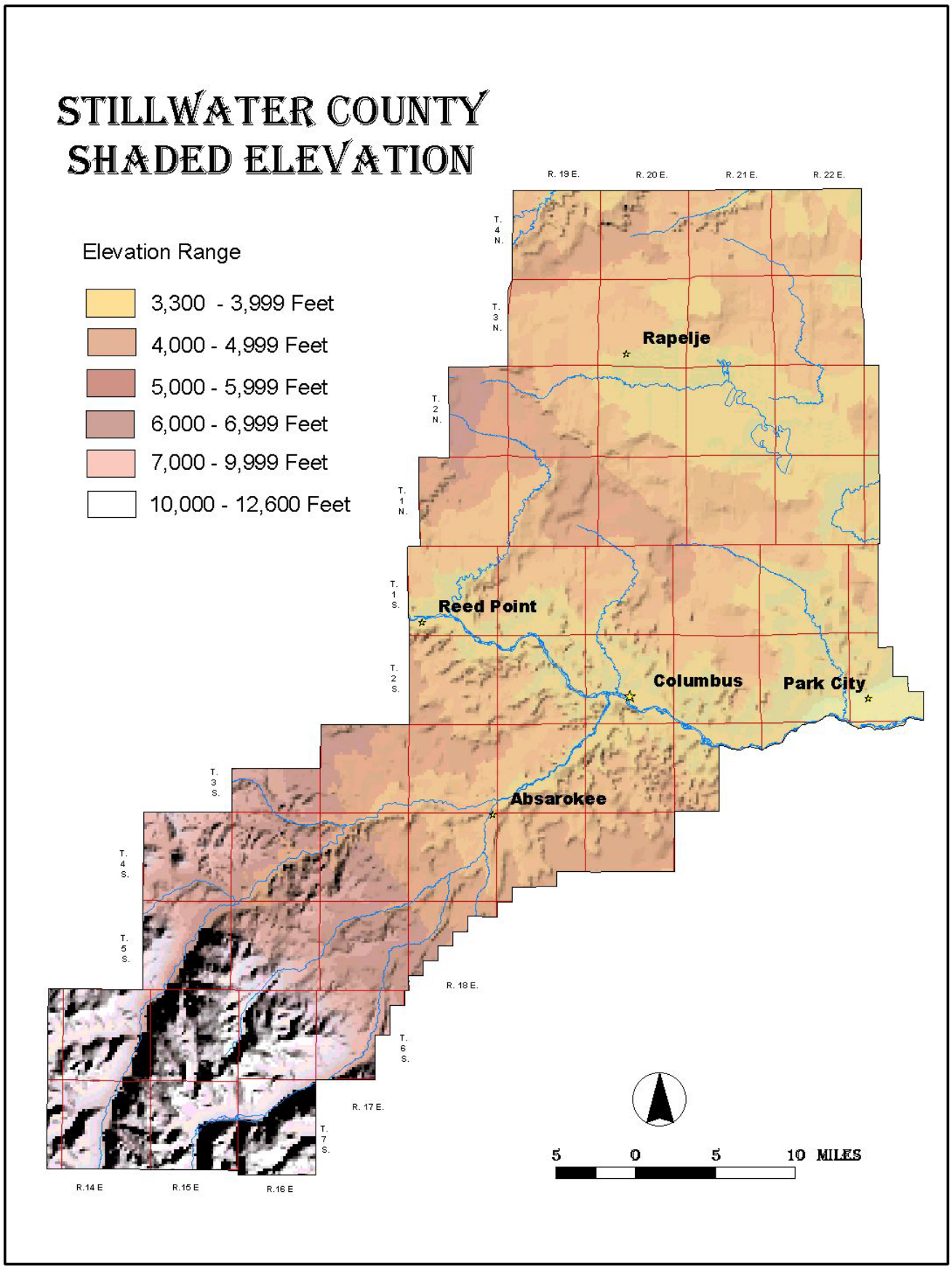
The soils of Stillwater County vary significantly and more detailed soils information is contained in the Soil Survey of Stillwater County.

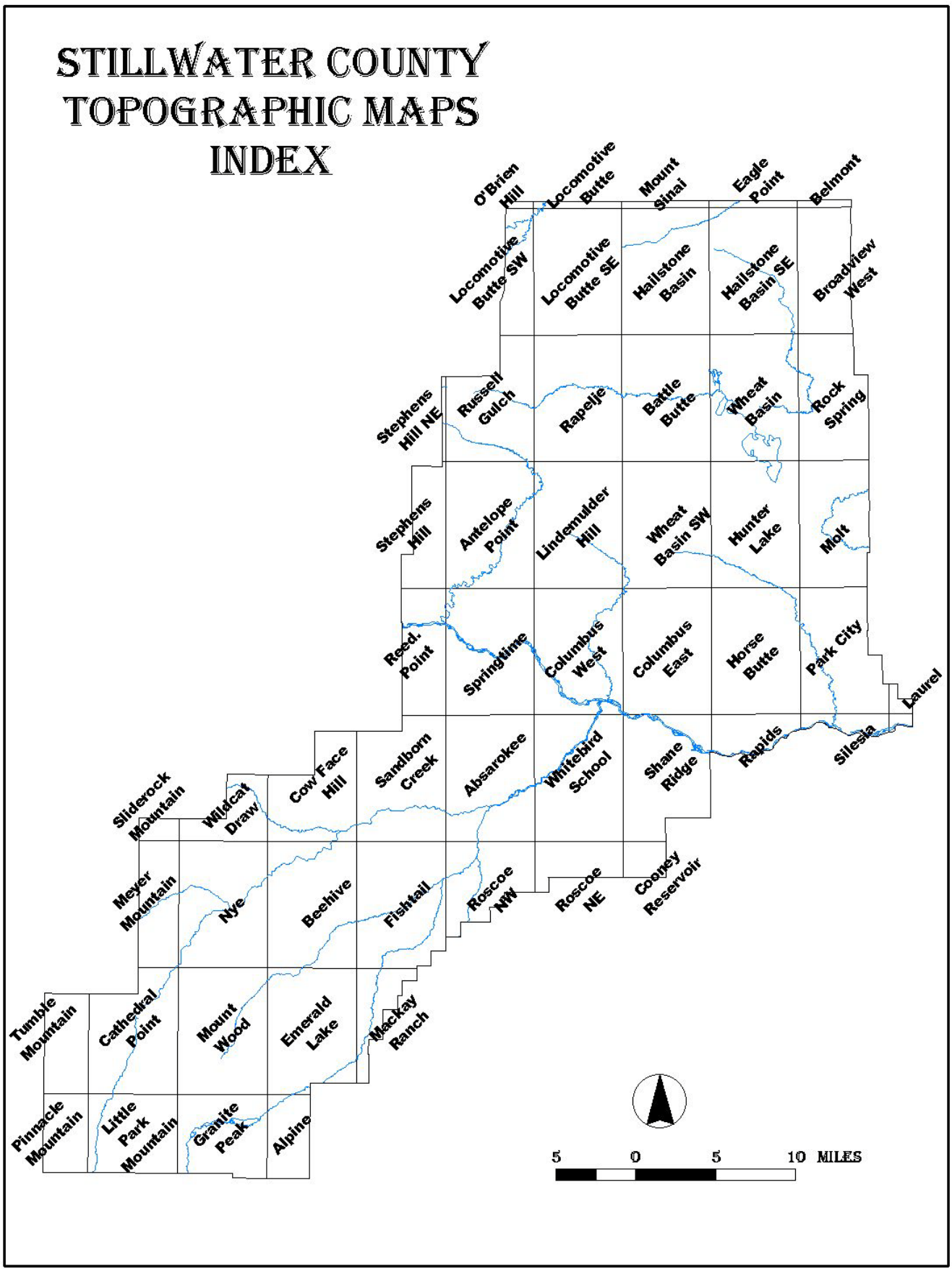
## TOPOGRAPHY

The topographical features of Stillwater County can be classified as mountains, foothills, river valleys and terraces, eroded uplands, cliffs, and lake basin. Elevation ranges from 3,300 feet above sea level on the Yellowstone River east of Park City to 12,600 feet in the Beartooth Mountains. The shaded elevation map shows the elevation ranges and major topographic features.

The Beartooth Mountains are located in the southern part of the county on the Custer National Forest. This glaciated landscape has the greatest local variation in relief within the county. Elevations range from 5,000 to 12,000 feet above sea level within a ten mile distance. The Stillwater River Valley is below 5,000 feet near Nye; the Stillwater Plateau and Fishtail Plateau are around 10,000 feet; Mount Hague, Mount Wood, and Pyramid Mountain. all exceed 12,000 feet. Foothills are located between the Beartooth Mountains and Fishtail Creek. These foothills were shaped by unconsolidated sediments derived from glacial out-wash and range in elevation from 5,000 to 7,000 feet.

Most of Stillwater County is drained by the Yellowstone River except Big Coulee Creek and Painted Robe Creek in the northern part of the county, which drain into the Musselshell River. Painted Robe and Big Coulee are prominent topographic features in the northern most part of Stillwater County. Elevations in these coulees are below 4,000 feet. The Yellowstone River Valley is the most prominent topographic feature in the central section of the county and flows in a southeasterly direction. The river cuts through relatively steep cliffs and broad alluvial terraces. The Yellowstone River Valley is below 4,000 feet in elevation and widths range from several hundred feet to more than a mile. The Stillwater River and the Rosebud Creek drainages


STILLWATER COUNTY
SHADED ELEVATION
Elevation Range
3,300 - 3,999 Feet
4,000 - 4,999 Feet
5,000 - 5,999 Feet
6,000 - 6,999 Feet
7,000 - 9,999 Feet
10,000 - 12,600 Feet
R. 19 E.
R. 20 E.
R. 21 E.
R. 22 E.
T. 4 N.
T. 3 N.
T. 2 N.
T. 1 N.
T. 1 S.
T. 2 S.
T. 3 S.
T. 4 S.
T. 5 S.
T. 6 S.
T. 7 S.
R. 18 E.
R. 17 E.
R. 16 E
R. 15 E
R. 14 E
Rapelje
Reed Point
Columbus
Park City
Absarokee
5 0 5 10 MILES


STILLWATER COUNTY
TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS
INDEX
O'Brien Hill
Locomotive Butte
Mount Sinai
Eagle Point
Belmont
Locomotive Butte SW
Locomotive Butte SE
Hailstone Basin
Hailstone Basin SE
Broadview West
Stephens Hill NE
Russell Gulch
Rapelje
Battle Butte
Wheat Basin
Rock Spring
Stephens Hill
Antelope Point
Lindemulder Hill
Wheat Basin SW
Hunter Lake
Molt
Reed Point
Springtime
Columbus West
Columbus East
Horse Butte
Park City
Laurel
Sliderock Mountain
Wildcat Draw
Cow Face Hill
Sandborn Creek
Absarokee
Whitebird School
Shane Ridge
Rapids
Silesia
Meyer Mountain
Nye
Beehive
Fishtail
Roscoe NW
Roscoe NE
Cooney Reservoir
Tumble Mountain
Cathedral Point
Mount Wood
Emerald Lake
MacKay Ranch
Pinnacle Mountain
Little Park Mountain
Granite Peak
Alpine
5 0 5 10 MILES

are two major tributaries of the Yellowstone River in this area. These tributaries flow northeast from the southern portion of the county. The Reed Point, Springtime, Columbus, Flaherety Flat, and Park City areas are examples of alluvial terraces along the Yellowstone River valley.

A significant part of the county is classified as eroded uplands. The eroded uplands are mostly rolling, dissected, sandstone and shale strata at elevations around 4,000 to 5,000 feet. Shale is less resistant to erosion than sandstone and forms steep sandstone cliffs at various locations. Examples of the eroded uplands topography are located in northern Stillwater County and the central part of the county along the Yellowstone and Stillwater River valleys.

The lake basins in the northern part of the county are confined and poorly drained depressions containing temporary lakes that vary in size annually. The largest basin in the county, Lake Basin, lies in a northwest to southeast direction between Rapelje and Molt. This lake basin is around 4,000 feet in elevation. Hailstone Basin and Wheat Basin are also located in this area.

Steep slopes in excess of 25% grade are considered to be unsuitable for subdivisions. Steep slopes are associated with individual topographic features and in transitional areas between land forms. For example, between river valleys and eroded uplands, sides of coulees and lake basins, and among the mountains.

The U.S. Geological Survey has published 7.5 minute topographic maps for Stillwater County. The county map of topographic maps index (see page 5-52) contains the names of the available topographic maps. These maps contain more detailed topographic information with 20 foot contour intervals.

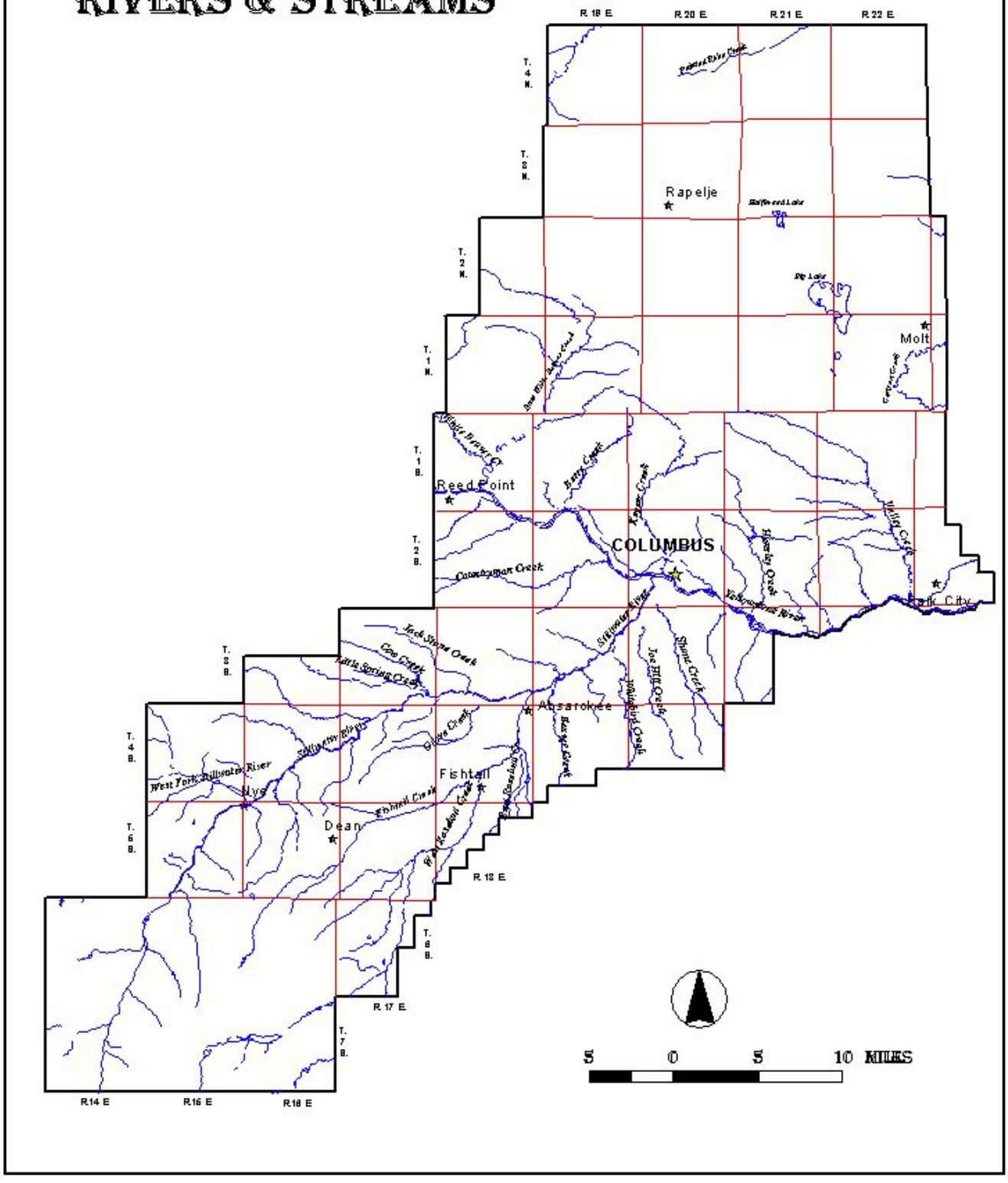
## WATER RESOURCES

### SURFACE WATER

Surface waters in Stillwater County include Dallman Lake, Hunter Lake, Halfbreed Lake and Big Lake in the north central portion. There are numerous mountain lakes such as Emerald, West Rosebud, Mystic, Island, Silver Lake, Sioux Charlie, Chrome Lakes and Lake Wilderness in the Custer National Forest in the southwestern portion of the county. These high mountain lakes feed the Stillwater and Rosebud drainage areas from the Stillwater Plateau, Fishtail Plateau and Beartooth Plateau and are an important water resource of Stillwater County.

A relatively small portion of northern Stillwater County drains into the Musselshell River Basin from Big Coulee Creek and Painted Robe Creek. Most of the county is in the Yellowstone River Basin. The Yellowstone River flows easterly through the center of the county. Its main tributaries from the north are White Beaver Creek, Keyser Creek, Berry Creek and Valley Creek. The main tributaries flowing from the south are Countryman Creek and the Stillwater River with all of its tributaries. Tributaries to the Stillwater River include Shane Creek, Joe Hill Creek, Whitebird Creek, Beaver Creek, Rosebud Creek, Jack Stone Creek, Spring Creek, Grove Creek, Trout Creek, Bad Canyon Creek, Midnight Canyon Creek, Little Rocky Creek, Castle Creek, Lodgepole Creek, Prairie Creek, Nye Creek, Woodbine Creek and numerous other smaller tributaries. Tributaries to Rosebud Creek include Butcher Creek, East Rosebud Creek, Antelope Creek, West Rosebud Creek, Fiddler Creek and Fishtail Creek.

# STILLWATER COUNTY RIVERS & STREAMS



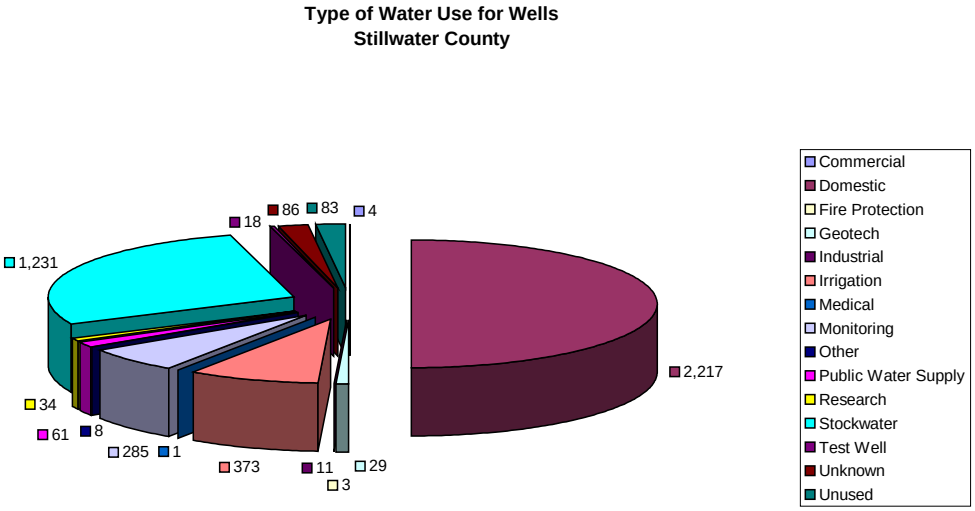
Stream flow volumes on the Yellowstone River differ greatly within the area. Peak flow usually occurs May to July. Average flows of 3,757 cfs have been recorded up river at Livingston and 6,913 cfs down river at Billings. Water temperatures range from 34º in the winter to 69º in July. Water quality of the Yellowstone River is variable. Total dissolved solids can vary from 60 mg/l to 100 mg/l and pH was between 6.5 to 9.2. Slightly elevated levels of iron, lead, manganese and selenium have been reported.

The Stillwater River drains over 900 square miles. Flows range from 600 cfs in the winter to 4900 cfs during peak flow May to July. An average flow of 991 cfs has been recorded at the gage station between Columbus and Absarokee. Water temperatures range from 32º in the winter to 55º in July. Water quality of the Stillwater River is generally good to excellent. Total dissolved solids are typically below 100 mg/l. Dissolved solids, alkalinity, and hardness increase gradually downstream. Alkalinity averaged 60 mg/l and the pH was between 6.3 to 9.9. Slightly elevated levels of iron, lead, manganese and cadmium have been reported.

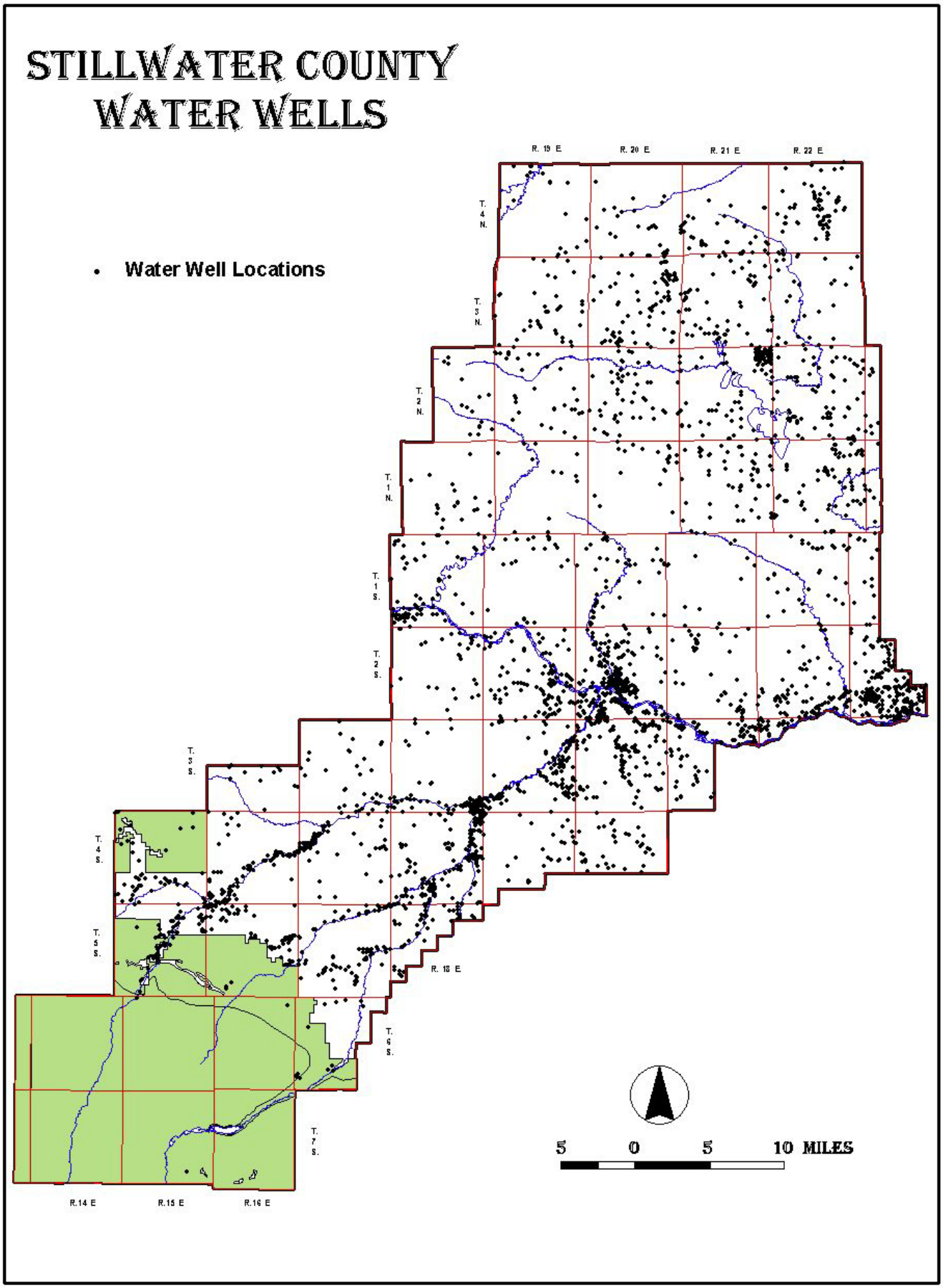
Rosebud Creek drains about 400 square miles. Flows range from 200 cfs in the winter to 1400 cfs during peak flow May to July. An average flow of 438 cfs has been recorded at the gage station above Absarokee. Water temperatures range from 32º in the winter to 55º in July. Water quality of Rosebud Creek is generally good to excellent.

## GROUND WATER

Groundwater is available from alluvium sands, terrace gravels, limestone and sandstone rocks. The Bearpaw shale is not normally an aquifer. Groundwater in the Yellowstone valley flows in an easterly direction and groundwater in the Stillwater valley flows in a northerly direction. Recharge to the aquifers is primarily from infiltration of precipitation on the outcrops, infiltration from stream flow, interaquifer leakage or from subsurface flow.




*Source: Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology*


STILLWATER COUNTY
WATER WELLS
Water Well Locations
R. 19 E
R. 20 E
R. 21 E
R. 22 E
T. 4 N.
T. 3 N.
T. 2 N.
T. 1 N.
T. 1 S.
T. 2 S.
T. 3 S.
T. 4 S.
T. 5 S.
T. 6 S.
T. 7 S.
R. 18 E
R.14 E
R.15 E
R.16 E
5 0 5 10 MILES

There are several hundred ground water appropriations filed in Stillwater County. The water is used for domestic purposes, stock watering and for municipal water supplies. Large supplies of ground water can be obtained from the alluvial deposit along the river valleys of the Rosebud, Stillwater and Yellowstone. Wells in the Yellowstone Valley have been found to produce flows ranging from ten gallons per minute to 300 gallons per minute. Along the Rosebud and Stillwater Rivers, wells yield flows varying from eight gallons per minute to 250 gallons per minute. These wells vary in depth from twenty feet to eighty feet.

Reed Point, Columbus and Park City have wells which produce a very adequate supply of water and are from 20 to 50 feet deep. Water is obtained from the alluvial deposits. Absarokee has a very adequate supply of ground water from the alluvial deposits of Rosebud Creek and the Stillwater River with a well drawing water from a sandstone layer about 100 feet deep. Wells near Fishtail produce adequate water from a depth of around 110 feet. Ground water supply is available to all cities and town within the county in varying quantities.

Ground water supply in the northeastern area of the county is limited. Water bearing deposits such as the Judith River Sandstone and Eagle Sandstone produce small quantities of water. Recorded flows vary from two gallons per minute to twenty-five gallons per minute. Depths are from 50 feet to over 100 feet. The greater depths do not necessarily result in increased flows. Reports on wells at Rapelje show an average depth of well at 80 feet, with average flows of about nine gallons per minute. This is an indication of the ground water supply available north of the Yellowstone Valley. An average well depth near Molt is about 135 feet and the average flow per well is about nine gallons per minute.

Ground water quality varies greatly among each aquifer. Near neutral range for pH was reported from 7.3 to 7.5. Total dissolved solids ranged from 1500 to over 3000 mg/l. Average hardness ranged from 170 to 1500 mg/l with most ground water being in the hard to very hard range. However ground water from some alluvium deposits and the Eagle Sandstone is considered "soft water". Concentrations of trace elements were commonly less than maximums set for drinking water standards set by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. However, concentrations of iron, manganese, lead, selenium and cadmium exceeded the standards in some samples.

## IRRIGATION DITCHES

County records indicate approximately 91 ditches exist in Stillwater County. The following major ditches transport surface water for agricultural uses: The Big Ditch, Butcher Creek, Rosebud Ditch, Yellowstone Ditch, Flaherety Ditch, Garrigus Ditch, Gilbert and Tunnel Ditch, Italian Ditch, Mendenhall Ditch, Merrill Ditch, Old Mill Ditch, Phelps Ditch, Reed Point Ditch, Shane Ditch, Columbus Irrigation Project, Cove Ditch, and Kem-Mulherin Ditch (Buck and Oravetz, 1946).

## VEGETATION

The major factors affecting vegetation distribution in the county are: (1) slope, (2) aspect, (3) moisture availability (4) human and animal activities. Establishment of plants is more difficult on steep slopes due to decreasing soil stability and a greater frequency of soil movement. Plants which do become established on steep slopes are important soil stabilizers, and removal of the

vegetation increases erosion. Slope aspect affects vegetation distribution primarily by influencing available soil moisture. North facing slopes are shaded more and lose less moisture due to evaporation. The north facing draws seem to exhibit this best in the jurisdictional area. These draws are usually heavily forested with Ponderosa Pine and display a substantial under story growth. Disturbances of natural grasslands such as grazing, fire, and cultivation bring about changes in the composition of plant communities. Invasion of big sagebrush, short grasses and annual and perennial forbs are evident on overgrazed rangeland.

## MAJOR ECOSYSTEMS

Vegetation within Stillwater County has been classified into ecosystems. Montane forest, intermountain grassland, riparian, plains forest, and plains grassland ecosystems are representative of vegetation communities identified in the county. Agricultural lands also provide a variety of range and farmland vegetation. The brief description of these ecosystems indicates their location within the county and associated characteristics (Ross and Hunter, 1976).

Montane forest ecosystem of the Beartooth Mountains is partially located in southern Stillwater County. This area is managed by the Custer National Forest including the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. Vegetation of this area includes alpine tundra plants and high elevation meadow grasses such as stonecrop, moss silene, red mountain heath, sedge, yellow avens, tufted phlox, shrubby cinquefoil, bluejoint, sheep fescue, alpine bluegrass, timothy, and native legumes. Trees include whitebark pine, subalpine fir, spruce, Douglas fir and lodgepole pine. Substantial aspen stands occur in wet creek bottoms or spring fed drainages. Elevation, aspect, moisture and soil type determine vegetative distribution. Douglas fir/lodgepole forests are usually dense with little under story development while aspen stands contain a diverse under story of shrubs, herbaceous and grass species. Areas of steep terrain covered by trees, brush, and dense undergrowth are the primary fire hazards. The density of this growth varies, but appears to be heaviest in shaded drainages where greater amounts of moisture are available.

The intermountain grassland ecosystem is located in the foothills between the Yellowstone River valley and the Beartooth Mountains in southern Stillwater County. This ecosystem type is located on relatively flat to steep mountain benches and foothills. The majority of this foothill grassland is located on private ranches. Vegetation includes wheatgrass, needle grass, thickspike, wild rye, June grass, lupine, fescue, balsamroot, and larkspur. These grasslands provide pasture for beef cattle, sheep and horses.

Riparian and wetland ecosystems are plant communities closely associated with rivers, streams and wet soils. Wetland areas in Stillwater County include springs, cattail marshes, sedge meadows, seeps, bogs, abandoned river oxbows, ponds, lakes and other areas that support wetland vegetation. Some areas that are seasonally flooded can also be considered wetlands. They are marked by high water tables. They can vary greatly in plant species composition depending on elevation, size of the drainage and soil type. In Stillwater County riparian ecosystems include broad cottonwood forests along the Yellowstone River and its major tributaries; herbaceous riparian complex along narrow stream banks with willow, alder, dogwood, snowberry, wild roses, chokecherry shrubs, sedges and forbs in the southern part of the county; coulees with perennial or intermittent streams in central and northern locations within the county. Ephemeral wetlands of northern Stillwater County are undrained depressions that retain water and support herbaceous wetland vegetation usually in the spring and during wet

years. In areas of saline soils, alkali sacaton, Nuttall saltgrass, inland saltgrass and perennial forbs dominate. These riparian and wetland ecosystems serve as aquifer recharge areas, help maintain water quality and reduce the impacts of seasonal flooding.

The Plains forest ecosystem is located in the rolling to steep hills adjoining the Yellowstone River valley in central Stillwater County. This ecosystem type is located on hilly terrain with relatively open ponderosa pine forest cover with associated vegetation including Rocky Mountain juniper, wheatgrass, skunk brush, snowberry, needleandthread, and native legumes. The majority of the plains forest ecosystem is located on private land. The steep hills covered with trees, brush, and grasses contain the greatest fire hazard.

The Plains grassland ecosystem is located in northern Stillwater County. In addition to a variety of wheat, vegetation in the plains grassland ecosystem includes wheatgrass, needle grass, June grass, reedgrass, sandreed, milkvetches, sagebrush, thickspike, and other native legumes.

## CRITICAL PLANT COMMUNITIES

State ranked critically imperiled plant species located in Stillwater County include arctic pearlwort, pygmy gentian, arctic buttercup found in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, plus the few-flowered goldenrod found in the Stillwater valley and musk root found in the Jackstone Creek drainage. Ice grass, slender gentian, located in the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, and small yellow lady's slipper, located near Nye, have a state rank of imperiled. The bluebunch wheatgrass/prairie June grass plant community type located north of Park City, near Miller Butte, is considered rare for this part of its range (Natural Heritage Program, 1995).

Vegetation on stream banks, steep or unstable slopes, or on soils highly erodible by water or wind is also critical plant communities. The riparian vegetation associated with the Yellowstone, Stillwater, and Rosebud River drainages and along many of the tributaries represents critical plant communities. Steep slopes in the county are usually covered by the grassland and forested grassland type plant communities which are critical for slope stability.

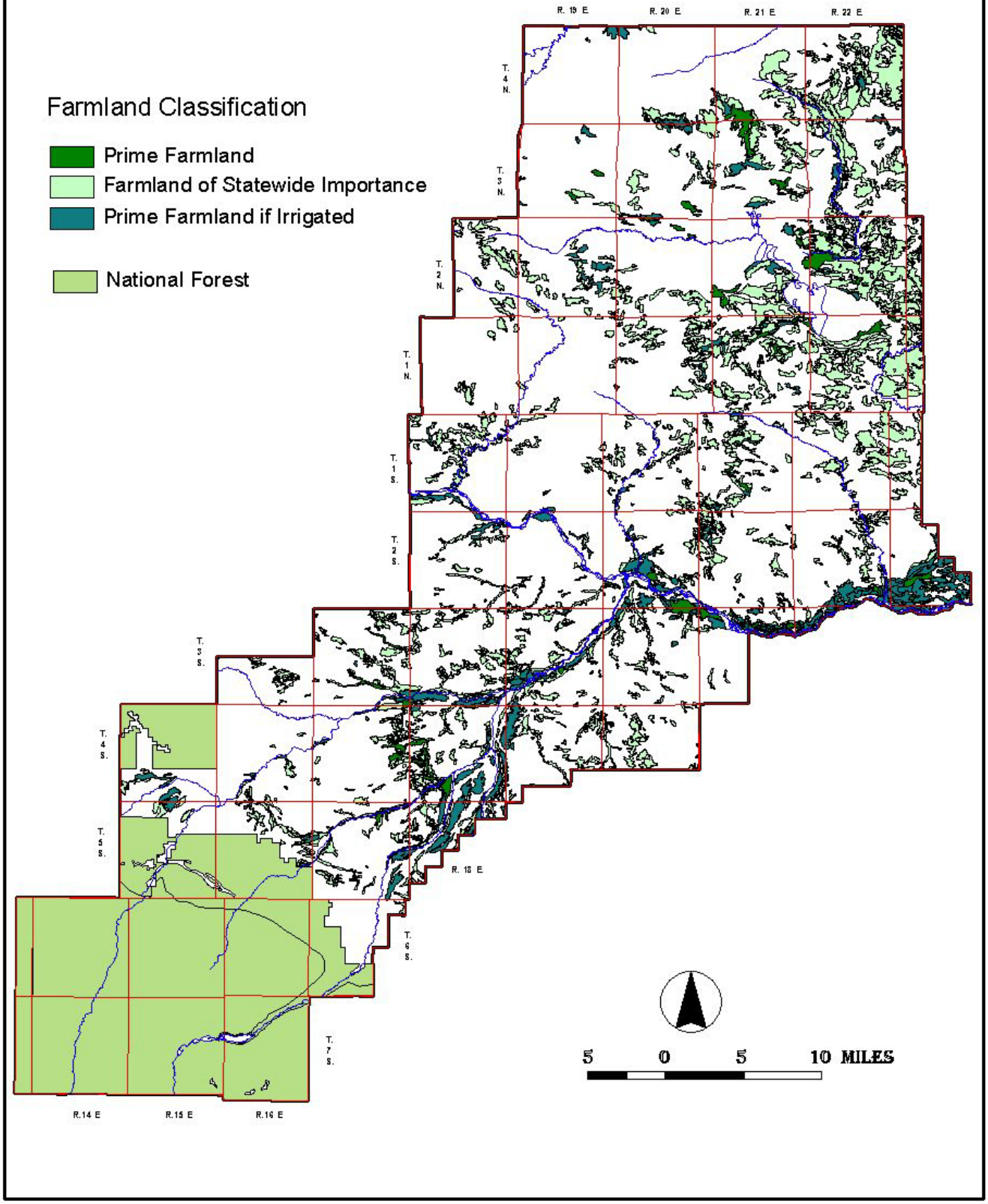
## AGRICULTURAL LANDS AND CROPS

Prime farmland is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for cropland, pastureland, rangeland, forest land, or other land, but not urban built-up or water. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable methods.

In general, prime farmlands have an adequate and dependable water supply from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. They are permeable to water and air. Prime farmlands are not excessively erodible or saturated with water for a long period of time, and they either do not flood frequently or are protected from flooding.

Approximately 56,500 acres within Stillwater County are classified prime farmland. This prime farmland is located in the Butcher Creek, West Rosebud Creek, Stillwater River and Yellowstone River drainages. Additional farmland would be considered prime if it was irrigated.

# STILLWATER COUNTY
# FARMLAND CLASSIFICATION



Another 51,690 acres is considered farmland of statewide importance. Farmland of statewide importance is dry or irrigated farmland that is nearly prime and that produces high yields of crops economically when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. This land is located along drainages and benches adjacent to creeks in southern and the central portions of the county. There is also farmland of statewide importance located in the Lake Basin area in northern Stillwater County. The farmland classification map shows the location of prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, and prime farmland if irrigated within the county.

In 2002 agricultural lands included over 600,000 acres of rangeland used for pasture or grazing livestock. Over 47,000 cattle and 5,800 sheep were reported. Private woodlands occupy over 13,700 acres. There was 36,000 acres planted for winter wheat and spring wheat producing 16 bushels per acre. Wheat fields are mostly non-irrigated lands in northern Stillwater County. There are 52,000 acres of land used as hayfields in the county. These hayfields have been producing an average of 1.2 tons of hay per acre, primarily alfalfa. The irrigated hayfields are located in the southern part of the county. There are approximately 20,000 acres of tillable irrigated land and 150,000 acres of non-irrigated tillable land. Barley is grown on 20,400 acres in the northern part of the county, which produce about 23 bushels per acre. There are 2,100 acres of corn grown and 360 acres of sugar beets in the Park City area.

## NOXIOUS WEEDS

The following noxious weeds exist throughout Montana as well as Stillwater County.

**Category 1:** Category 1 noxious weeds are weeds that are currently established and generally widespread in many counties of the state. Management criteria include awareness and education, containment and suppression of existing infestations and prevention of new infestations. These weeds are capable of rapid spread and render land unfit or greatly limit beneficial uses.

(a) Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*)
(b) field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*)
(c) whitetop or hoary cress (*Cardaria draba*)
(d) leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*)
(e) Russian knapweed (*Centaurea repens*)
(f) spotted knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*)
(g) diffuse knapweed (*Centaurea diffusa*)
(h) Dalmatian toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*)
(i) St. Johnswort (*Hypericum perforatum*)
(j) sulfur (erect) cinquefoil (*Potentilla recta*)
(k) common tansy(*Tanacetum vulgare* L.)
(l) ox-eye daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum* L.)
(m) houndstongue (*Cynoglossum officinale* L.
(n) yellow toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*)

C**ategory 2:** Category 2 noxious weeds have recently been introduced into the state or are rapidly spreading from their current infestation sites. These weeds are capable of rapid spread and invasion of lands, rendering lands unfit for beneficial uses. Management criteria include awareness and education, monitoring and containment of known infestations and eradication where possible.

(a) dyers woad (*Isatis tinctoria*)

(b) purple loosestrife or lythrum *(Lythrum salicaria, L. virgatum*, and any hybrid crosses
(c) tansy ragwort (*Senecio jacobea* L.)
(d) meadow hawkweed complex *(Hieracium pratense, H. floribundum, H. piloselloides)*
(e) orange hawkweed *(Hieracium aurantiacum* L.*)*
(f) tall buttercup *(Ranunculus acris* L.)
(g) tamarisk [saltcedar] (*Tamarix* spp.)
(h) Perennial pepperweed *(Lepidium latifolium)*

**Category 3**: Category 3 noxious weeds have not been detected in the state or may be found in only small, scattered, localized infestations. Management criteria include awareness and education, early detection, and immediate action to eradicate infestations. These weeds are known pests in nearby states and are capable of rapid spread and render land unfit for beneficial uses.
(a) yellow starthistle (*Centaurea solstitialis)*
(b) common crupina (*Crupina vulgaris*)
(c) rush skeletonweed (*Chondrilla juncea*)
(d) Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*)
(e) yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*)

The characteristics of some of these weeds are as follows: Leafy spurge is a deep rooted perennial forb that spreads by seeds and roots and can reduce cattle and wildlife grazing capacity up to 90%. It is very difficult to control once it becomes established. This weed is a particular problem in the Yellowstone and Stillwater river drainages in the southern half of the county.

Spotted knapweed is a biennial or short lived perennial which causes loss of crop production, wildlife habitat, increases moisture runoff, soil erosion, and stream sedimentation. This weed is a concern county wide. Russian knapweed is a deep-rooted, rhizomatous, perennial forb that can cause nervous disorders if consumed by horses.

Houndstongue is a biennial plant with a taproot and a cluster of leaves during the first year of growth but attains heights up to four feet. It also has dark red flowers in terminal clusters. This weed adversely affects rangeland in the foothills of southern Stillwater County.

Dalmatian toadflax is a perennial plant which greatly reduces livestock and wildlife grazing capacity. Dalmatian toadflax reproduces by seed and roots, has bright yellow snap-dragon-like flowers with a long spur and is very difficult to control once it becomes established. This weed is a problem along highways and the railroad across the county.

Canada thistle is a perennial form reproducing by seed and creeping root stocks. Canada thistle has purple flower heads with male and female flowers on separate plants and can produce up to 20,000 seeds per year per plant.

Sulfur cinquefoil is a long-lived perennial with a woody rootstock, numerous stem leaves and few basal leaves. It is well-adapted to dry open range and pasture areas. This weed is a problem south of the Yellowstone River.

Field bindweed is a prostrate, perennial vine with an extensive rhizomatous root system and funnel-shaped pale pink to white flowers. The field bindweed has seeds that can remain viable in the soil for more than 60 years. This weed is a problem in the wheat fields of northern Stillwater County.

Whitetop is a deep rooted perennial forb that spreads by seeds and root fragments. Whitetop emerges very early in the spring and sets seed by mid summer. This weed is a problem in Reed Point area and along major rivers in the county.

## WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

### MAJOR WILDLIFE HABITAT

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks has classified wildlife habitats by ecosystem. Montane forest, intermountain grassland, riparian, plains forest, and plains grassland ecosystems are representative of wildlife habitat identified in the Stillwater County. Agricultural lands are also used by wildlife as habitat (Jorgensen, 1994).

This section briefly describes these habitats, their location within the county and associated wildlife occurrences (Ross and Hunter, 1976).

The Montane forest ecosystem of the Beartooth Mountains is partially located in southern Stillwater County. This area is managed by the Custer National Forest and includes the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. Vegetation of this area includes alpine tundra plant communities, high elevation meadow grasses, whitebark pine, subalpine fir, spruce, Douglas fir and lodgepole pine. Elevation, aspect, moisture and soil type determine vegetative distribution. Substantial aspen stands occur in wet soil conditions including creek bottoms and spring fed drainages. Douglas fir/lodgepole forests are usually dense with little under story development while aspen stands contain a diverse under story of shrubs, herbaceous and grass species. Montane forests provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife plus important escape and thermal cover adjacent to intermountain grassland feeding areas for big game species. Elk, moose, deer, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, black bears, mountain lions, wolves and grizzly bears inhabit the mountain ecosystem located in southern Stillwater County. Other large mammals, predators, furbearers, and a variety of birds occur in this ecosystem. Rainbow, brown, cutthroat and brook trout also inhabit some lakes and streams of the Montane forest ecosystem.

The intermountain grassland ecosystem is located in the foothills between the Yellowstone River valley and the Beartooth Mountains in southern Stillwater County. This habitat type favors relatively flat to steep mountain benches and foothills. The majority of this foothill grassland is located on privately owned ranches. Vegetation includes wheatgrass, needle grass, wild rye, June grass, lupine, fescue, balsamroot, and larkspur. These grasslands provide pasture for beef cattle, sheep and horses. Elk and mule deer also use this habitat for winter range. Big game winter ranges are critical factors in supporting elk and deer populations when food is generally unavailable elsewhere. In the winter there is a preference for south and west slopes, wind blown areas and hay meadows. Mule deer often forage close to roads and can develop specific movement patterns between evening and morning feeding areas and daytime bedding areas. Activity along these corridors is routine and mule deer related vehicle accidents occur.

Riparian habitats are water tolerant plant communities closely associated with rivers, streams and wet soils. They can vary greatly in plant species composition depending on elevation, size of the drainage and soil type. In Stillwater County riparian habitats include broad cottonwood forests along the Yellowstone River and its major tributaries; narrow stream banks with willow, dogwood, and chokecherry shrubs in the southern part of the county; coulees with perennial or intermittent streams in central and northern locations within the county. Wetland areas in Stillwater County include springs, marshes, seeps, bogs, abandoned river oxbows, ponds, lakes and other areas that support wetland vegetation. Some areas that are seasonally flooded can also be considered wetlands. They are marked by high water tables. Wetlands provide significant wildlife habitat that attract a wide variety of species, particularly waterfowl, non-game birds, furbearers, predators, and white-tailed deer. River shoreline, islands and adjacent wetlands also provide suitable nesting habitat for geese and other waterfowl. Riparian and wetland areas help maintain good water quality and reduce the impacts of seasonal flooding.

The plains forest ecosystem is located in the rolling to steep hills adjoining the Yellowstone River valley in central Stillwater County. This habitat type is located on hilly terrain with relatively open ponderosa pine forest cover with associated vegetation including Rocky Mountain juniper, wheatgrass, skunk brush, snowberry, needleandthread, and native legumes. The majority of this plains forest ecosystem is located on privately owned land. Elk, mule deer and wild turkeys use this habitat year-round. The proximity of the forested areas to croplands and hayfields along the Yellowstone River allows mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, and wild turkeys to utilize agricultural lands for feeding and the forested areas for escape, security cover and rearing of young.

The Plains grassland ecosystem and interspersed dryland grain fields in northern Stillwater County provide habitat for antelope, grouse, pheasants, falcons, hawks and deer. In addition to a variety of wheat, vegetation in the plains grassland ecosystem includes wheatgrass, needle grass, June grass, reedgrass, sandreed, milkvetches, sagebrush, thickspike, and other native legumes. Brushy coulees also provide forage, security and escape cover for wildlife that feed in the adjacent agricultural areas.

Agricultural lands are seasonal sources of food for mule deer, white-tailed deer, antelope, geese, waterfowl and other birds. Use of irrigated hayfields in the southern part of the county and dryland crops in northern Stillwater County by wildlife results in some net loss in commercial production. Livestock are also vulnerable to predation from coyotes, wolves, bear and mountain lions.

## WILDLIFE SPECIES DIVERSITY

The diversity of wildlife species in Stillwater County includes big game species and other ungulates, fur bearers, raptors, upland game birds, numerous other birds, waterfowl, amphibians and reptiles, and several species of fish. Mule deer and white-tailed deer are common big game species throughout Stillwater County. Elk, moose, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, black bears, mountain lions, wolves and grizzly bears inhabit the mountain ecosystem located in southern Stillwater County. Pronghorn antelope inhabit the northern part of the county in the plains grassland ecosystem. Other mammals, predators and furbearers are represented by red fox, coyotes, bobcats, lynx, badgers, striped skunks, porcupines, raccoons, weasels, mink, beaver,

muskrats, marmots, and pine marten. There are also a variety of small mammals in the county.

There are diverse groups of bird species living in Stillwater County. The raptors include bald eagles, golden eagles, peregrine falcons, prairie falcons, red-tailed hawks, rough-legged hawks, kestrels, great horned owls, burrowing owls, and long eared owls. Upland game birds include ruffed grouse, blue grouse, sage grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, pheasants, wild turkeys, and gray partridges. Waterfowl migrating through the county include whooping cranes, sandhill cranes, great blue herons, swans, snow geese, Canada geese, pelicans, mallards, pintails, gadwalls, widgeons, shovelers, teal, coots, curlews, canvasbacks, scaups, buffleheads, goldeneyes, ruddy ducks, mergansers, and cormorants. There are numerous other species of birds which have been recorded in Stillwater County. Robins, sparrows, finches, meadowlarks, juncos, wrens, buntings, warblers, flickers, woodpeckers, bluebirds, starlings, crows, red-headed blackbirds, starling, waxwings, chickadees, nuthatches, magpie, jays, terns, gulls, swallows, hummingbirds, larks, ravens, sandpipers, killdeer and mourning doves are some of the more common species noted.

A few notable reptiles and amphibians include frogs, garter snakes, bullsnakes, and prairie rattlesnakes. The primary game fish in Stillwater County include mountain whitefish, ling, rainbow, brown, cutthroat and brook trout.

## THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

The grizzly bear, Northern Rocky Mountain wolf, peregrine falcon, and whooping cranes have been listed as threatened or endangered species. Historically bald eagles have nested along the Stillwater and Yellowstone Rivers in Stillwater County. Eagles nest in riparian habitat typically in old growth cottonwood forests. They require an undisturbed area around the nest site. Indications of grizzly bear have been found in the southwestern part of the county. Critical grizzly bear habitat has been designated on the National Forest. Wolf sightings or sign have also been reported in the same area. However, this may only be seasonal range for wolves. Information pertaining to peregrine falcons within the county is limited. There have been confirmed sightings in the northeastern part of the county and along the Beartooth Mountains in the southern part of the county. The rocky cliffs and outcrops used for roosting and nesting purposes situated with the large expanses of open grassland offer habitat for these birds. Irregular sightings of whooping cranes indicate they migrate seasonally through the area but do not nest here. The large wetlands on the wildlife refuges in northern Stillwater County and the Yellowstone River with adjoining agricultural fields provide suitable habitat for migrating whooping cranes (Montana Natural Heritage Program, 1995).

## WILDLIFE REFUGES AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

There are two national wildlife refuges located in Stillwater County. Hailstone National Wildlife Refuge and Halfbreed Lake National Wildlife Refuge are located in the north central part of the county between Rapelje and Molt (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 1980 and 1987). These refuges are managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Big Lake, also located in the north central part of the county, is a Wildlife Management Area of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks. There are also eleven fishing access sites managed by Fish, Wildlife & Parks and over sixty sections of state land managed by the Montana Department of State Lands. The Custer

National Forest manages the national forest lands in Stillwater County for wildlife and fisheries habitat.

# CHAPTER 6: PROJECTED TRENDS

## 6.1 LAND USE:

The mix of public and private land use is projected to remain relatively constant with 78% in private ownership. However, private land use is changing as agricultural land and some timberland is converted to tract land through the subdivision activity in Stillwater County. There was a decline in lands classified agricultural by more than 10,000 acres from 1997 to 2004. This trend is expected to continue through 2010 to meet the demand for residential properties. The Park City area is currently experiencing the most subdivision activity.

Commercial, industrial and other higher density development is projected to remain concentrated in existing town sites with available infrastructure capacity. Properties exempt from taxes more than doubled from 444 acres to 999 acres since 1997. This trend is not projected to continue at the same rate. However, specific agricultural, residential and commercial properties may be considered for tax exempt status on a case by case basis.

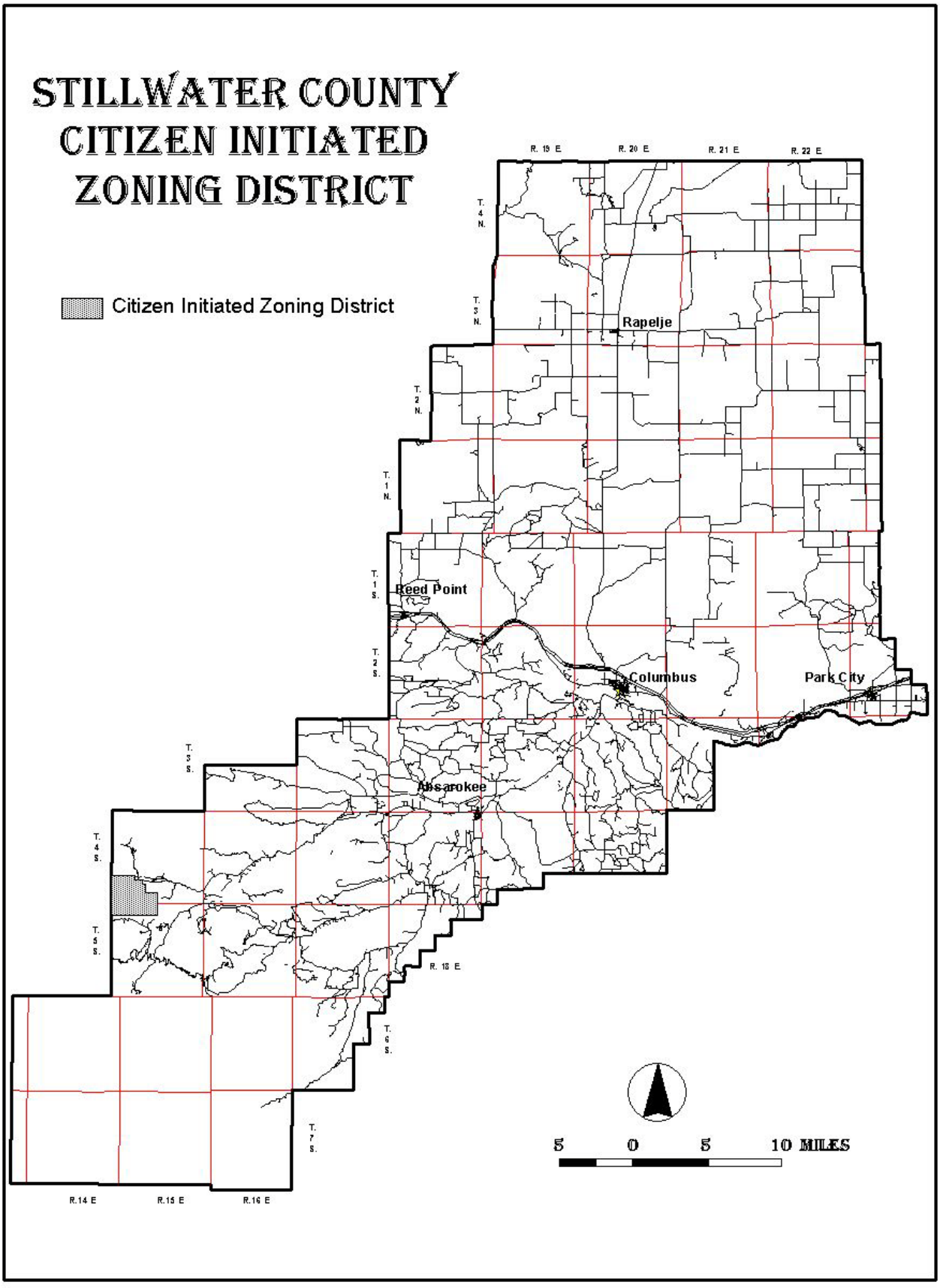
Concern has been expressed in resident surveys and community forums about land use conflicts. The trend is to find a balance between property rights and regulating new developments that conflict with existing uses. Examples of land use conflicts include manufacturing plants using flammable or explosive materials locating next to dry land crops; adult entertainment businesses locating near schools, churches and residences; or pre-1976 mobile homes locating near custom built homes. Stillwater County currently has one citizen initiated zoning district on the West Fork of the Stillwater River (see following map) and has received petitions and inquiries about creating other planning and zoning districts. This trend may continue in the absence of land use controls.

## 6.2 POPULATION:

Total population in Stillwater County increased from 6,536 to 8,195 between the 1990 and 2000 Census. This represents an average annual population growth rate of approximately 2.5 % between 1990 and 2000 compared to the increase from 1980 to 1990 that averaged 1.5 % per year. The overall population trend in the county planning jurisdictional area indicates continued growth of 1% to 2% per year. This general growth trend is projected to continue through with a total population of 9,770.

Over 20% of the population lives in the Columbus city-county planning jurisdiction. The population in the county planning jurisdiction was estimated to be 6,284 in the 2000 Census and is projected to be over 7,500 in 2010.

This population trend is the result of a higher birth rate than death rate and continued migration of people into Stillwater County. Birth rates and death rates are not projected to change significantly. However, net migration is projected to be lower through 2010 than it was between 1990 and 2000. Gender, age and racial composition of the population are projected to remain


STILLWATER COUNTY
CITIZEN INITIATED
ZONING DISTRICT
Citizen Initiated Zoning District
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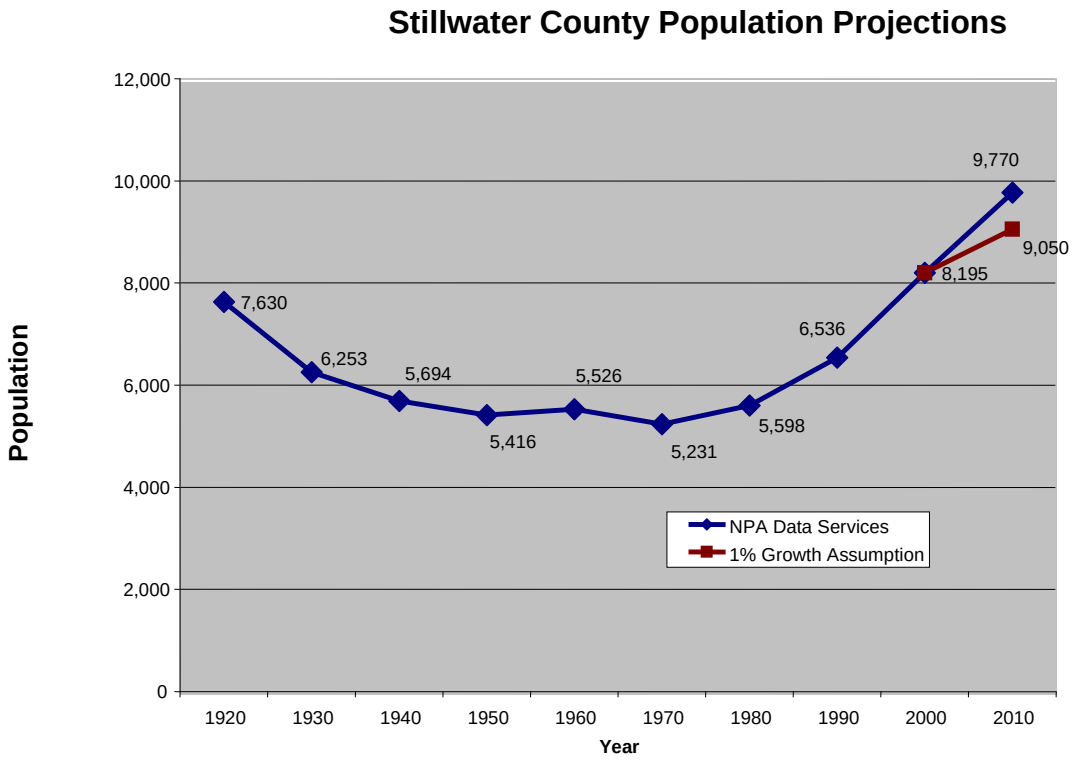
R. 20 E
R. 21 E
R. 22 E
T. 4 N.
T. 3 N.
T. 2 N.
T. 1 N.
T. 1 S.
T. 2 S.
T. 3 S.
T. 4 S.
T. 5 S.
T. 6 S.
T. 7 S.
R. 18 E
R.14 E
R.15 E
R.16 E
Rapelje
Reed Point
Columbus
Park City
Absarokee
5 0 5 10 MILES

The graph below shows Stillwater County population trends from 1920 though 2000 and future projection to 2010.




The median age of the population increased from 36.5 to 40.8 from 1990 to 2000. Age groups under 5 years old and 18-24 declined while all other age groups increased. These trends reflect a slightly aging population and people leaving home after high school graduation for pursuits outside the county. The 46-64 age group increased by over 72% exceeding the overall countywide rate of 25.4 %. This is the age group representing most people moving into Stillwater County.

The following table shows population by age group for 1990 and 2000. The percentage change is also shown.

**Population by Age Group**

| Age Group | 1990 | 2000 | % Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Under 5 | 476 | 448 | - 5.5 |
| 5-17 | 1,329 | 1,800 | + 35.4 |
| 18-24 | 390 | 293 | - 29.9 |
| 25-44 | 1,937 | 2,206 | + 13.9 |
| 46-64 | 1,314 | 2,262 | + 72.1 |
| 65 & over | 1,090 | 1,186 | + 9.0 |
| Under 18 | 1,805 | 2,073 | + 14.8 |
| Median Age | 36.5 | 40.8 | + 11.5 |

The following table shows that male and female populations in Stillwater County are about equal and have been growing at approximately the same rate. The racial mix in the county remains predominantly white. No significant change is projected.

**Population by Sex and Race**

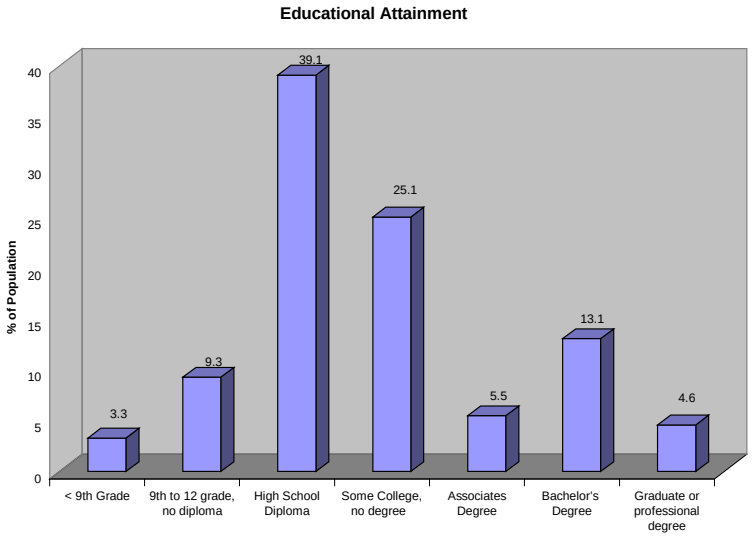
| Characteristic | 1990 | 2000 | % Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 3,261 | 4,178 | 28.1 |
| Female | 3,275 | 4,017 | 22.7 |
| White | 6,352 | 7,933 | 24.9 |
| Other | 159 | 262 | 64.7 |

The difference in percentage of males to females was less than five percent in 1990 and was less than one percent in 2000. The racial composition of the population remained predominately white at 96.8% white and 3.2% other races.

The level of education for the population showed an increase of over 35% for people with high school diplomas and a college degree.

**Education for Population**

| Educational level | 1990 | 2000 | % Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| High School Diploma | 1,589 | 2,201 | +38.5 |
| College Degree (4+ yrs) | 735 | 1,005 | +36.7 |




The population increased in all elementary school districts from 1990 to 2000 except the Fishtail district. The largest population increases occurred in the Absarokee, Columbus and Park City districts followed by Reed Point, Nye, Rapelje and Molt. The majority of the increase in the Columbus district occurred in the county planning jurisdiction. The Columbus area remains the most populated area of the county followed by Absarokee and Park City. This trend is projected to continue through 2010.

The table below shows the 1990 and 2000 population by elementary school district, population change from 1990 to 2000, and the percentage change.

**Stillwater County population change by elementary school district**

| | 1990 population | 2000 population | Population Change | % Change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Absarokee Elementary District | 1,474 | 1,843 | 369 | 25% |
| Columbus Elementary District | 2,531 | 3,195 | 664 | 26% |
| City-County jurisdiction | 1,573 | 1,911 | 175 | 21% |
| County planning jurisdiction | 958 | 1,284 | 326 | 34% |
| Fishtail Elementary District | 397 | 367 | -30 | -8% |
| Molt Elementary District | 111 | 158 | 47 | 42% |
| Nye Elementary District | 211 | 311 | 100 | 47% |
| Park City Elementary District | 1,412 | 1,766 | 354 | 25% |
| Rapelje Elementary District | 224 | 290 | 66 | 29% |
| Reed Point Elementary District | 423 | 524 | 101 | 24% |

The average persons per household remained almost the same from 1990 to 2000. The average household size declined slightly from 2.39 in 1990 to 2.37 in the 2000 Census. Total number of households increased from 2,579 in 1990 to 3,234 in 2000. This is more than a 25% increase. The average family size also declined from 3.02 in 1990 to 2.98 in 2000. Family households increased from 1,920 in 1990 to 2,348 in 2000, which is over 25% increase. This trend is not projected to continue through 2010 at the same rate.

## 6.3 HOUSING NEEDS:

The total number of housing units increased in Stillwater County from 3,291 in 1990 to 3,947 in the 2000 Census. The county planning jurisdiction has an estimated 3,185 housing units. The average value of housing units increased from $60,451 in 1990 to $102,200 in 2000. This is more than a 69% increase. Median rent also increased from $303 per month to $439 during the same time period.

**Housing Units**

| **Characteristic** | **1990** | **2000** | **%** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total Units | 3,291 | 3,947 | + 19.9 |
| Occupied | 2,523 | 3,234 | + 28.2 |
| Owner Occupied | 1,857 | 2,458 | + 32.4 |
| Average Value | $ 60,451 | $ 102,200 | + 69.1 |
| Renter Occupied | 666 | 776 | + 16.5 |
| Median Contract Rent | $ 303 | $ 439 | + 44.9 |
| Mobile Homes | 695 | 763 | + 19.6 |

Housing units by elementary school district are shown in the table below.

**Housing Units by elementary school district**

| | **1990** | | | **2000** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **occupied** | **vacant** | **total** | **occupied** | **vacant** | **total** |
| Absarokee Elementary District | 607 | 246 | 853 | 761 | 354 | 1,115 |
| Columbus Elementary District | 983 | 157 | 1,140 | 1,257 | 173 | 1,430 |
| Fishtail Elementary District | 137 | 73 | 210 | 160 | 110 | 270 |
| Molt Elementary District | 46 | 11 | 57 | 59 | 6 | 65 |
| Nye Elementary District | 87 | 196 | 283 | 125 | 60 | 285 |
| Park City Elementary District | 508 | 60 | 568 | 658 | 37 | 695 |
| Rapelje Elementary District | 80 | 25 | 105 | 112 | 13 | 125 |
| Reed Point Elementary District | 143 | 42 | 185 | 208 | 42 | 250 |
| Stillwater County | 2,523 | 768 | 3,291 | 3,234 | 713 | 3,947 |
| Town of Columbus | 627 | 54 | 681 | 709 | 53 | 762 |
| County Planning jurisdiction | 1,896 | 714 | 2,610 | 2,525 | 660 | 3,185 |

(*Source: U.S. Census Bureau)*

The number of subdivision lots in Stillwater County reviewed under county subdivision regulations increased from 251 during 1980-1990 to 532 during 1990-2000. This is a 112% increase. Tracts exempt from subdivision review decreased from 1,012 to 337 during the same time period. This trend indicates more lots are being reviewed under subdivision laws and regulations and fewer are exempt than in the past. This is a result of changes in the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act.

**Subdivision Activity**

| Type | 1980-90 | 1990-00 | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Subdivision Lots | 251 | 532 | + 112.0 % |
| Tracts exempt from review | 1,012 | 337 | – 66.7 % |
| Total | 1,263 | 869 | – 31.2 % |

*(Source: Stillwater County Planning Dept.)*

## 6.4 ECONOMIC CONDITIONS:

Employment increased from 3,162 in 1990 to 4,613 in 2000. This is a 47% increase. The unemployment rate increased from 3.9% to 4.9% during this same time period.

**Civilian Labor Force**

| Characteristic | 1990 | 2000 | % Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 3,291 | 4,851 | +47% |
| Employment | 3,162 | 4,613 | +46% |
| Unemployment | 129 | 238 | +84% |
| Unemployment Rate | 3.9% | 4.9% | +25% |

Per capita income in Stillwater County has increased 17.83 % since 1970, in real terms. This data indicates an average growth rate of 0.59 %. This is stated in *real terms*, signifying that the figures have been adjusted to remove cost-of-living increases as a factor.

**Per Capita Income (adjusted)**

| Year | Amount | Change |
|---|---|---|
| 1970 | $ 15,674 | N/A |
| 1980 | $ 16,794 | + 7.15 % |
| 1990 | $ 17,241 | + 2.66 % |
| 2000 | $ 18,468 | + 7.12 % |

Non-labor income sources constituted 40 % of total personal income in 1997, up from 33 % in 1970. Dividends, interest, and rent (that is, all monies earned from past investments) accounted for 19 %, while transfer payments accounted for 22 %. Non-labor income sources (investment income, rent, payments, etc.) accounted for 40% of total personal income in 1997, and 49% of all personal income growth since 1970. The fastest-growing component of non-labor income was transfer payments (retirement, insurance, welfare, medicare, etc.), which accounted for 31% of all income growth. In 1997, 76 % of transfer payments were from age-related sources (retirement, disability, and medicare).

Growth occurred in average income for households, families, and per capita between 1990 and 2000, while the percentage of persons at or below the poverty level continued to decline.

Median household income increased from $23,582 in 1990 to $39,205 in 2000. Median family income increased from $29,362 in 1990 to $45,238 in 2000. Per capita income also increased over the same time period from $10,975 to $18,468.

**Income and Poverty**

| Income Type | 1990 | 2000 | % Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Median Household | $23,582 | $ 39,205 | + 66.6 |
| Median Family | $29,362 | $ 45,238 | + 54.0 |
| Per Capita | $10,975 | $ 18,468 | + 68.3 |
| Persons below Poverty | 10.6 % | 9.8 % | |

Market valuation in Stillwater County increased from $287,722,354 in 1990 to $821,024,689 in 2003. Market values are shown by elementary school districts from 1990 to 2004 in the following table.

**Stillwater County Market Values by Elementary School District**

| | 1990-91 | 2000-01 | 2003-04 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Absarokee | $68,109,017 | $160,738,972 | $206,534,177 |
| Broadview | $10,095,669 | $13,135,988 | $11,906,201 |
| Columbus | $89,645,507 | $298,616,861 | $374,123,898 |
| Fishtail | $24,660,042 | $40,664,153 | $38,761,227 |
| Molt | $5,642,862 | $11,777,533 | $12,156,265 |
| Nye | $19,478,689 | $34,902,238 | $35,689,195 |
| Park City | $34,101,240 | $58,538,699 | $63,915,419 |
| Rapelje | $26,104,729 | $59,554,775 | $54,710,683 |
| Reed Point | $9,878,599 | $19,827,548 | $23,227,625 |
| | | | |
| Stillwater County | $287,722,354 | $697,756,767 | $821,024,689 |
| Town of Columbus | $46,504,703 | $153,519,989 | $193,848,643 |
| County jurisdiction | $241,217,651 | $544,236,778 | $627,176,046 |

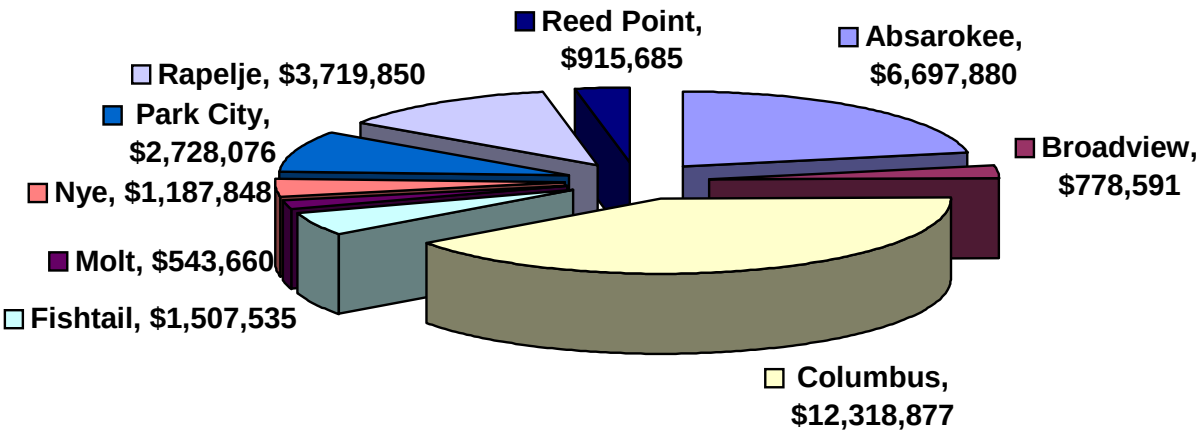
Taxable valuation in Stillwater County increased from $18,077,368 in 1990 to $30,398,001 in 2003. However, the same rate of development is not projected to continue through 2010. Trends in taxable values are shown by elementary school districts in the following table.

**Stillwater County Taxable Values by Elementary School District**

| | 1990-91 | 2000-01 | 2003-04 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Absarokee | $3,447,379 | $5,496,096 | $6,697,880 |
| Broadview | $1,111,521 | $934,631 | $778,591 |
| Columbus | $4,825,191 | $10,485,521 | $12,318,877 |
| Fishtail | $1,881,888 | $1,799,516 | $1,507,535 |
| Molt | $512,370 | $579,245 | $543,660 |
| Nye | $959,368 | $1,220,857 | $1,187,848 |
| Park City | $1,849,554 | $2,854,263 | $2,728,076 |
| Rapelje | $2,698,643 | $4,433,487 | $3,719,850 |
| Reed Point | $791,454 | $839,052 | $915,685 |
| | | | |
| Stillwater County | $18,077,368 | $28,642,666 | $30,398,001 |
| Town of Columbus | $2,234,098 | $5,202,096 | $6,234,112 |
| County jurisdiction | $15,843,270 | $23,440,570 | $24,163,889 |

The following pie graph shows the relative proportion of the distribution of taxable valuation by elementary school district. The trend in geographic distribution of taxable valuation by elementary school districts in Stillwater County is projected to continue through 2010.

**Stillwater County Taxable Values by Elementary School District 2003-04**

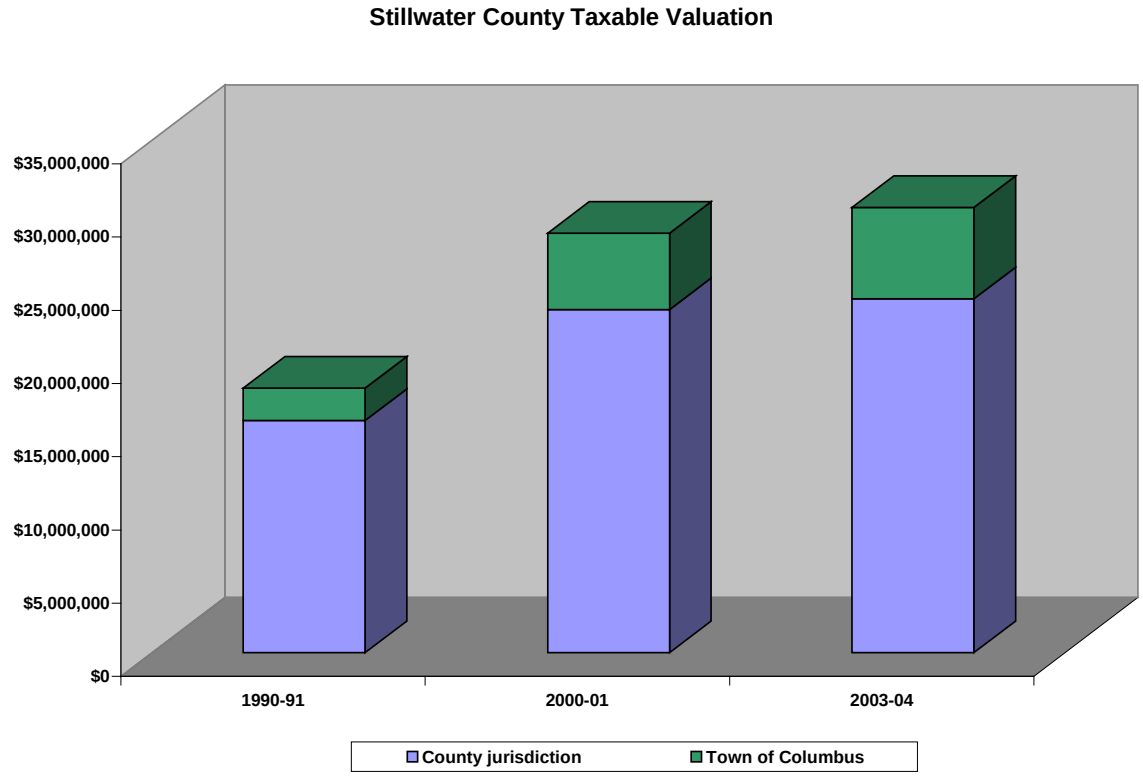


## 6.5 LOCAL SERVICES:

The trend in local services indicates increases in county services as the taxable value increased. Mill levies have remained relatively stable while the taxable valuation of Stillwater County has increased from $18,077,368 in 1990-91 to over $30 million in 2003-04 fiscal year. Approximately 80% of the taxable value is in the county planning jurisdiction and 20% in the Columbus area. The table below shows total taxable value for Stillwater County and the figures for the town of Columbus and county jurisdiction.

| | 1990-91 | 2000-01 | 2003-04 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Stillwater County | $18,077,368 | $28,642,666 | $30,398,001 |
| Town of Columbus | $2,234,098 | $5,202,096 | $6,234,112 |
| County jurisdiction | $15,843,270 | $23,440,570 | $24,163,889 |

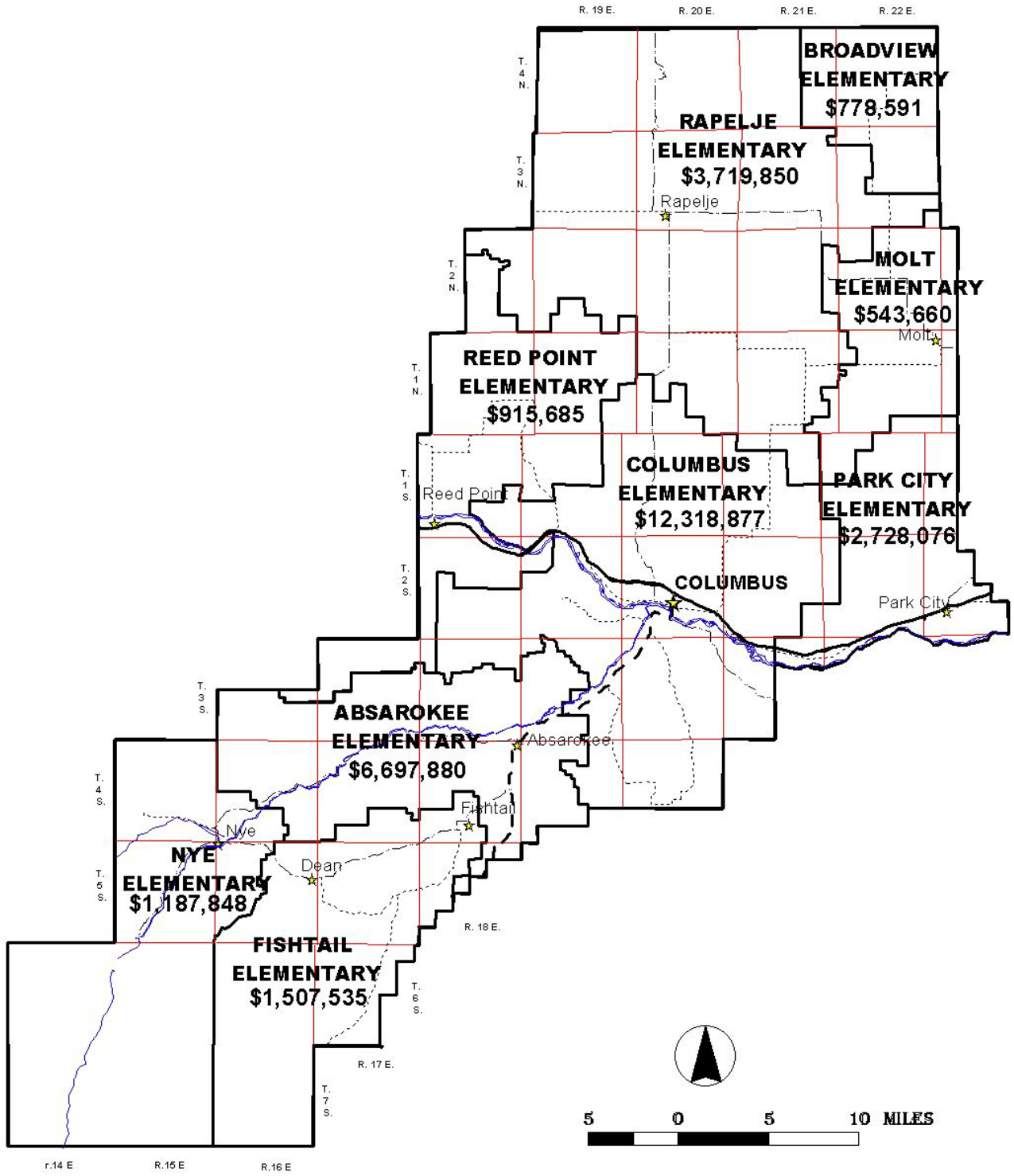
The graph below shows the relative trend in taxable valuation for the county jurisdiction and town of Columbus from 1990 to the current fiscal year.




The trend in local services indicates operating budgets have been increasing; with improvements in technology and equipment; and additional training over time. Emphasis has been placed on emergency planning, training and preparedness. The County Finance & Human Resource and GIS function are recent services added to county government.

The following map shows the 2003-04 taxable value by elementary school district in the County.

# STILLWATER COUNTY
# 2003-04 TAXABLE VALUE



The trend in school and educational services has included more involvement by the State of Montana in funding, curriculum and other aspects of kindergarten through secondary education. The graph below shows the trends in school enrollment. The trend from 1990 to 2000 indicates the number of students in the county have not increased at rates consistent with the overall population increase.

**Stillwater County - School Enrollment**

| | 1990-1991 | 2000-2001 | 2003-2004 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Absarokee Elementary | 199 | 194 | 186 |
| Absarokee 7-8 | 57 | 56 | 55 |
| Absarokee High School | 131 | 135 | 117 |
| total | 387 | 385 | 358 |
| | | | |
| Columbus Elementary | 327 | 286 | 261 |
| Columbus Middle School | 75 | 141 | 182 |
| High School | 137 | 217 | 197 |
| total | 539 | 644 | 640 |
| | | | |
| Fishtail Elementary | 43 | 23 | 7 |
| | | | |
| Molt Elementary | 10 | 9 | 8 |
| | | | |
| Nye Elementary | 5 | 13 | 4 |
| | | | |
| Park City Elementary | 179 | 160 | 166 |
| Park City 7-8 | 54 | 45 | 62 |
| Park City High School | 104 | 114 | 87 |
| total | 337 | 319 | 315 |
| | | | |
| Rapelje Elementary | 35 | 45 | 35 |
| Rapelje 7-8 | 13 | 13 | 14 |
| Rapelje High School | 24 | 26 | 27 |
| total | 72 | 84 | 76 |
| | | | |
| Reed Point Elementary | 26 | 44 | 46 |
| Reed Point 7-8 | 12 | 16 | 18 |
| Reed Point High School | 15 | 46 | 36 |
| total | 53 | 106 | 100 |
| | | | |
| **TOTAL** | 1,446 | 1,583 | 1,508 |

Other local services have also been improving over time. Those services include medical services with more advanced technology and telecommunications; fire protection through additional training, new facilities and equipment; and improvement in facilities and services provided by other special districts. Significant changes have occurred with the trend to deregulate utilities. Ownership of electrical, natural gas and telephone services has been changing relatively rapidly.

## 6.6 NATURAL RESOURCES:

### Weather

Natural resource trends include information indicating the mean annual precipitation has been below average and the mean annual temperatures have been above average for the past five years. Severe storms are not common; however, thunderstorms, hailstorms, high winds, heavy snow, freezing rain and sleet do occur. Available wind information indicates wind gusts in excess of 60 mph are not uncommon. Snow load ratings for roofs range from 30 in Columbus, Reed Point, Park City and the northern part of the county, 35 for the Absarokee area, and 85 for southern Stillwater County. The trend of variable weather conditions is expected to continue.

### Flooding

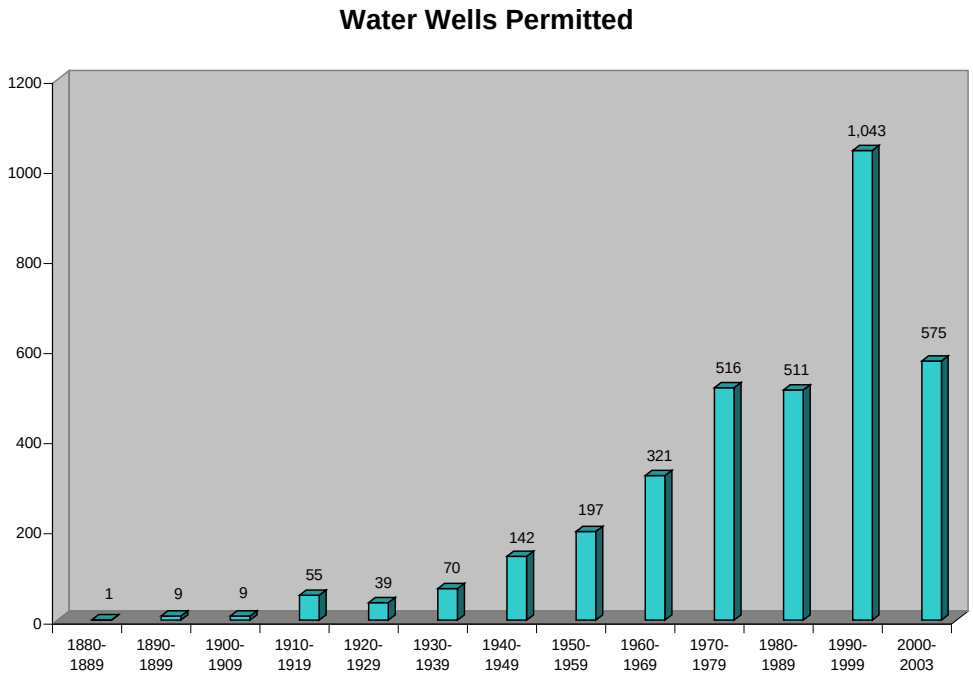
Heavy spring rains in conjunction with snowmelt runoff have caused major floods in the county. Major floods have been recorded in 1911, 1921, 1923, 1937, 1943, 1944, 1948, 1962, 1967, 1970, 1974, 1975, 1996 and 1997 on the Yellowstone River, the Stillwater River, Rosebud Creek and tributaries. Stillwater County has adopted a complete set of regulations pertaining to construction within the limits of the 100 year floodplain. Flood Boundary Maps show the limit of the 100 year floodplain. Ice jams also occur at random sites with no predictable pattern during winter and early spring. The trend of periodic flooding is expected to continue.

Yellowstone River flooding east of Columbus

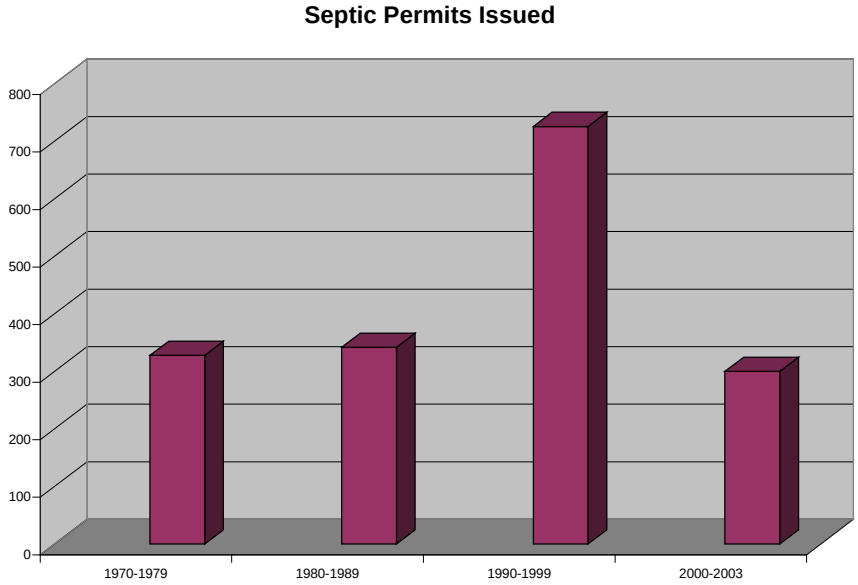
### Ground water

High water table conditions occur in the Reed Point area south of the river, southeast of Park City, east of Columbus, along the Stillwater River between Columbus and Absarokee, south of Absarokee along Rosebud Creek, in the Fishtail area, in the Nye area, and in the West Fork drainage. High water table conditions can be influenced by irrigation practices, which are seasonal. These trends are expected to continue.

There have also been increasing demands placed on groundwater resources. Over 1,000 water wells were permitted in Stillwater County from 1990 through 1999. This was over twice the number previously permitted in any previous decade. This trend continues as 575 water wells have already been permitted from 2000 through 2003. The following graph shows the number of water wells permitted over time in Stillwater County.




A similar trend is occurring with septic permits. Over 700 septic permits were issued from 1990 through 1999 and almost 300 septic permits were issued from 2000 through 2003. The following graph shows the number of individual septic systems permitted in Stillwater County.



## Coal Bed Methane

The development of methane gas from coal beds was brought up as an issue at two Growth Policy public meetings. Stillwater County does have potential coal bed methane resources within its boundaries, however little has occurred in actual development as of late 2007. Stillwater County should work within the limits of its authority to assure that any coal bed methane development that occurs is done so responsibly. The Stillwater County Conservation District may be the most appropriate entity to deal with the responsible development of coal bed methane. Citizen petitioned zoning available under 76-2-101, MCA, may provide an avenue for land use regulation related to coal bed methane development.

## Fire Hazards

Vegetation type and degree of slope are the main factors in determining natural fire hazards, along with weather conditions. The steeper forested slopes in the Beartooth Mountains, eroded uplands along the Yellowstone and Stillwater River valleys present a higher potential for wildland fires. Riparian zones, wetlands, cultivated pastures and the urban area are considered low natural fire hazard areas. Lightning/thunderstorms are relatively common in the county and are a natural cause of wildfires. These trends are expected to continue.

# CHAPTER 7: IMPLEMENTATION of GROWTH POLICY

## 7.1 POLICIES, REGULATIONS, and IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

This section includes a description of policies, regulations and other measures to achieve the community goals and objectives stated in Chapter 3 of this Stillwater County Growth Policy as required by 76-1-601 (2)(d), MCA.

MCA refers to Montana Codes Annotated, ARM refers to Administrative Rules of Montana, and CFR refers to the Code of Federal Regulations.

### 7.1.1 County Planning **(MCA Title 76, Chapter 1, Parts 1 through 6)**

The governing body of Stillwater County has created a County Planning Board to promote orderly development. The jurisdictional area includes all of Stillwater County except the incorporated limits of the Town of Columbus and adjoining areas of the County south of the Interstate 90 right-of-way, north of the Yellowstone River, east of State Secondary Highway 306 (Rapelje Road), and west of the section line between Sections 22 and 23, 26 and 27, T2S, R23E, M.P.M.

The County Planning Board is advisory to the Board of County Commissioners in proposing a growth policy, policies for subdivision plats, layout and development of public infrastructure, and utilities to platted and unplatted lands.

### 7.1.2 Open Meetings **(MCA Title 2, Chapter 3, Part 2)**

Public boards, commissions, councils, and other public agencies in the Town of Columbus and Stillwater County conduct public business, actions, and deliberations openly. All meetings of the governing bodies, boards, bureaus, commissions, agencies, or any political subdivision or organizations or agencies supported in whole or in part by public funds or expending public funds are open to the public.

All meetings that regulate the rights, duties, or privileges of any individual are open to the public. Provided, however, the presiding officer of any meeting may close the meeting during the time the discussion relates to a matter of individual privacy and then only if the presiding officer determines that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. The right of individual privacy may be waived by the individual about whom the discussion pertains and, in that event, the meeting must be open. A meeting may be closed when an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public agency.

### 7.1.3 Right to Farm **(MCA Title 76, Chapter 2, Part 9)**

Agricultural activities are protected from governmental zoning and nuisance ordinances. A city, county, taxing district or other political subdivision may not adopt an ordinance or resolution that prohibits any existing agricultural activities or forces the termination of any existing agricultural activities.

Stillwater County has not adopted and does not intend to adopt an ordinance or resolution that prohibits any existing agricultural activities or forces the termination of any existing agricultural activities.

### 7.1.4 Neighborhood Plans **(MCA Title 76, Chapter 1, Part 6)**

Neighborhood plans, consistent with the County's growth policy, may be approved and included in the growth policy as an addendum. The jurisdictional area for a neighborhood plan will be a census-designated place or an area equivalent to the portion of an elementary school district within Stillwater County. Neighborhood plans will address the primary review criteria outlined in 76-3-608(3) (a), MCA; evaluate the effect of subdivision on the criteria; describe zoning regulations or other conditions of approval that will be implemented to address the criteria; and identify geographic areas where the governing body intends to authorize an exemption from review of the criteria in 76-3-608 (3)(a), MCA, for proposed subdivisions.

All neighborhood plans are intended to achieve community goals and objectives.

### 7.1.5 Local Government Budgeting **(MCA Title 7, Chapter 6, Part 40)**

Local government budgets conform to the fund structure prescribed by the Montana Department of Administration. Local governments submit a complete copy of the final budget together with a statement of tax levies to the Montana Department of Administration by the later of October 1 or 60 days after receipt of taxable values from the Montana Department of Revenue.

Stillwater County and the Town of Columbus prepare an annual budget that includes funding for local services and public facilities necessary to achieve community goals and objectives.

### 7.1.6 Capital Improvements **(MCA Title 7, Chapter 6, Part 6)**

Local governments may provide a capital improvement fund for the replacement, improvement, and acquisition of property, facilities, or equipment that costs in excess of $5,000 and that has a life expectancy of five years or more. This capital improvement fund must be formally adopted by the governing body. Stillwater County has not

formally adopted a capital improvement program at this time. Capital improvement funds are approved during the annual budget process.

Montana Public Works Standard Specifications, including those for county roads and bridges, are used as a guideline on public works projects. Other applicable county policies, regulations and other lawful measures are implemented to achieve community goals and objectives until a capital improvement program is adopted.

### 7.1.7 Subdivision Regulations **(MCA Title 76, Chapter 3, Parts 1 through 6)**

The governing bodies of Stillwater County and the town of Columbus have adopted subdivision regulations to promote public health, safety, and general welfare by regulating the subdivision of land; preventing overcrowding; lessening congestion on streets and highways; providing for adequate light, air, water supply, sewage disposal, parks and recreation, ingress and egress, and other public requirements; requiring development in harmony with the natural environment; protecting the rights of property owners; and requiring uniform monumentation of land subdivisions by reference to a plat or certificate of survey.

Subdivision regulations for Stillwater County and the Town of Columbus contain general provisions; procedures for major and minor subdivisions; design and improvement standards; procedures and standards for subdivisions created by rent or lease, condominiums, and planned unit developments; administrative provisions; and other requirements. The subdivision regulations are amended periodically to stay current with statutory amendments, Attorney General Opinions, or other relevant changes.

### 7.1.8 Sanitation in Subdivisions **(MCA Title 76, Chapter 4, Part 1)** Subdivision Regulations **(ARM 17.36.101 through 17.36.805)**

Sanitation in subdivisions and associated rules and regulations has been adopted to control water supply, sewage disposal, and solid waste disposal. These include measures designed to protect individual wells potentially affected by adjoining sewage disposal and individual sewage systems; to protect the quality and potability of water for public water supplies and domestic uses; and to protect the quality of water for other beneficial uses.

A Board of Health has been established in accordance with 50-2-104, MCA, to oversee environmental health issues in the County. The Board of Health has adopted rules for on-site subsurface sewage treatment systems.

In addition, circulars published by Montana Department of Environmental Quality provide implementation guidance. These include DEQ 1 – Standards for Water Works, DEQ 2 – Design Standards for Wastewater Facilities, DEQ 3 – Standards for Small Water Systems, DEQ 4 – Montana Standards for On-Site Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems, DEQ 8 – Montana Standards for Subdivision Storm Drainage, DEQ 11 – Montana Standards for Development of Springs for Individual and shared Non-Public

Systems, DEQ 17 – Montana Standards for Cisterns for Individual Non-Public Systems, PWS 5 – Groundwater under the Direct Influence of Surface Water, PWS 6 – Source Water Protection Delineation, and WQB 7 – Montana Numeric Water Quality Standards.

### 7.1.9 Surveys and Coordinates Corner Recordation Requirements **(MCA Title 70, Chapter 22, Parts 1 and 2) and** Survey Monumentation Standards **(ARM 8.94.3001 through 8.94.3003)**

The purpose of these regulations is to protect and perpetuate public land survey corners and information concerning the location of these corners by requiring the systematic establishment of monuments and recording of information concerning the location of public land survey corners. The regulations also allow for the location of other property corners and providing for property security and a coherent system of property location and identification of ownership, thereby eliminating the repeated necessity for reestablishment and relocations of corners once they are established and located.

These records are maintained by the County Clerk and Recorder.

### 7.1.10 Airport Regulations **(MCA Title 67, Chapters 4-6, and 14 CFR 77)**

Airport approach, transitional, horizontal, and conical zones have been established with specified height limitations. Permitted uses on airport property are specified along with nonconforming uses and structures. Permits for future uses are also specified in accordance with regulations administered by the Federal Aviation Administration.

An airport layout plan and airspace plan have been prepared and existing obstructions have been identified. An airport influence area has been defined and prohibits uses not compatible with airport activity and expansion (such as a nursing home in the approach/departure zone.)

The Airport Board has established rules for operation and management of the airport. These rules address confinement of aircraft operations; traffic patterns; taxiing; aircraft safety, reports and accidents; fuelling and defuelling of aircraft; vehicular traffic; commercial operations; snow removal and mowing plan; airport management; lease or use agreement; hangars; airport hazard areas; through the fence access; revision of the regulations; grievance procedures; and penalty for violations.

### 7.1.11 Floodplain Regulations **(MCA Title 76, Chapter 3, Parts 1 through 6)**

Federal Floodplain Regulations **(44 CFR, Chapter 1, Parts 63-73)**

Recurrent flooding of land resources causes loss of life, damage to property, disruption of commerce and governmental services, and unsanitary conditions. These are all detrimental to the health, safety, welfare, and property of the occupants of flooded lands and the people of this state. It is in the public interest to manage regulation of flood-prone lands and waters in a manner consistent with sound land and water use management practices which will prevent and alleviate flooding threats to life and health and reduce private and public economic losses. Stillwater County may require cross section analysis of streams by an appropriate professional to determine current flood plain delineation.

Stillwater County has adopted floodplain regulations by resolution and the Town of Columbus has adopted floodplain regulations by ordinance. Floodplain regulations are amended periodically to stay current with statutory amendments, Attorney General opinions, or other relevant changes.

### 7.1.12 Economic Development **(MCA Title 15, Chapter 65, Part 1), (MCA Title 90, Chapter 1, Part 1) and (13CFR 302)**

Counties can participate in economic development and tourism programs for the purpose of promoting, developing and advancing the economic welfare of the State. Stillwater County participates in tourism promotion, certified communities, superhost, and other economic development programs.

Regional nonprofit tourism corporations maintain an annual marketing plan and receive state funding. Stillwater participates in Yellowstone Country tourism promotion activities by appointing a representative from the area.

Certified regional development corporations are private, nonprofit corporations that have been designated by the Montana Department of Commerce through a competitive process to manage and administer funds and programs for the Department on a regional basis.

Stillwater County participates in the Beartooth RC&D Economic Development District with representatives on the Board of Directors and the District Economic Development Committee. A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy was adopted in 2001.

### 7.1.13 Hard Rock Mining Impact Act **(MCA Title 90, Chapter 6, Part 3) and** Hard Rock Mining Impact Rules **(ARM 8.104.101 through 218)**

A Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan was prepared by Stillwater County and approved to assist Stillwater County and the Town of Columbus in meeting the initial financial impact of large-scale mineral development. The impact plan includes estimates of the number of persons coming into the impacted area; increased capital and operating cost to local

government units for providing services expected as a result of the development; and the financial or other assistance the mineral developer will provide affected local government units to meet the need for services.

Stillwater County, the Town of Columbus, and Columbus schools are identified as affected units of local government in the 1998 Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan Amendment for the Nye expansion project. Stillwater County and other units of local government are identified as potentially affected in the 1998 Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan Amendment for the East Boulder Project.

Stillwater County and other affected units of local government are subject to the rules, policies, and guidelines established by the Hard Rock Mining Impact Board and terms of the approved impact plans.

### 7.1.14 Property Tax Base Sharing **(MCA Title 90, Chapter 6, Part3)**

The increase in property tax base resulting from the development and operation of large-scale mines is allocated so that property tax revenues are equitably distributed among affected local government units. Employee surveys provided in accordance with 90-6-405, MCA, are utilized for the annual allocation of the increase in taxable valuation from a large-scale mineral development.

Stillwater County, the Town of Columbus, and other affected units of local government follow the procedures specified in the 1998 Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan Amendment for the Stillwater Mine at Nye.

### 7.1.15 Metal Mines License Tax **(MCA Title, 37, Part 1; Title 7, Chapter 6, Part 22; and Title 20, Chapter 9, Part 2)**

Stillwater County has established a hard-rock mine trust reserve account and a metal mines tax reserve account as authorized. The Columbus School District has also established a metal mines tax fund. The allocation of metal mines license tax revenues received is allocated by the Stillwater Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) annually in compliance with state statutes. The hard-rock mine trust account can only be used following a mine closure or a 50% reduction in mine workforce. The County's metal mines tax can be expended for planning and economic development activities. Schools can expend metal mines tax reserve for any purpose authorized by law.

### 7.1.16 School Districts **(MCA Title 20,Chapter 6,Parts 1 through 7)**

State statutes provide for school districts to provide public educational services under the jurisdiction of the district. An elementary district is a district organized for the purpose of providing public education for all grades up to and including grade 8 and for preschool programs and kindergartens. A high school district is a district organized for the purpose of providing those public educational services for all grades beyond grade 8, including

postsecondary programs, except those programs administered by community college districts or the Montana university system. The trustees of elementary districts and high school districts have powers, duties, and responsibilities authorized and imposed by Montana statues.

There are portions of nine elementary and six high school districts within the county planning jurisdiction. The school districts implement their own policies.

The funding program for the districts in the state is financed by a combination of county equalization money, state equalization aid, appropriations for special education, a district levy, for support of a school not approved as an isolated school under the provisions of MCA 20-9-302; and district levies or other revenue, as provided by MCA 20-9-308 and 20-9-353.

### 7.1.17 Rural Fire Districts **(MCA Title 7, Chapter 33, Part 21)**

The board of county commissioners is authorized to establish fire districts in any unincorporated territory or town upon presentation of a petition in writing signed by the owners of 50% or more of the area of the privately owned lands included within the proposed district who constitute a majority of the taxpayers who are freeholders of the area.

Absarokee, Columbus, Park City, and a portion of Broadview have fire districts within the Stillwater County planning jurisdiction. These fire districts implement the goals and objectives identified for fire prevention and control.

Plats—documents for rural subdivisions must note that emergency services are not immediately available due to distance and response time from communities of origin.

### 7.1.18 Solid Waste Management District **(MCA Title 7, Chapter 13, Part 2)**

State statutes provide for the creation of solid waste management districts to control storage, collection, and disposal of solid waste. Stillwater County has planned, developed, and implemented a solid waste management system consistent with the state's solid waste plan. A county solid waste board has been appointed to administer the district.

The solid waste district implements policies and regulations to achieve the goals and objectives identified for solid waste issues in cooperation with the county and state.

### 7.1.19 Rural Improvement Districts **(MCA Title 7, Chapter 12, Parts 21-41)**

Whenever the public interest or convenience may require, the Board of County Commissioners is authorized and empowered to create special improvement districts outside of the limits of incorporated towns for the purpose of building, constructing, or acquiring by purchase one or more of the improvements for the benefit of the special improvement district. When there has been or shall be created a rural improvement district, according to the provisions of Part 21, for the purpose of securing a lighting system for the rural improvement district, the Board of County Commissioners may enter into a contract with other persons or corporations for the purpose of furnishing light to said rural improvement district.

There are currently light districts in Absarokee, Park City and Reed Point. There are also two rural special improvement districts in Absarokee for sewer purposes that may be transferred to the Absarokee water and sewer district in the future. Rural special improvement districts implement the goals and objectives identified for town sites and public facilities in cooperation with the county.

### 7.1.20 Weed Control District **(MCA Title 7, Chapter 22, Part 21)**

A weed management district has been formed by the county and includes all the land within the boundaries of the county. The county commissioners have appointed a district weed board that provides a coordinator and other employees to purchase chemicals, materials, and equipment and other operational costs necessary for implementing an effective noxious weed management program.

The noxious weed management program is based on a plan approved by the board. The noxious weed management plan specifies the goals and priorities of the program; identifies the distribution and abundance of each noxious weed species known to occur within the district and specify the locations of new infestations and areas particularly susceptible to new infestations; specifies pesticide management goals and procedures, including but not limited to water quality protection, public and worker safety, equipment selection and maintenance, and pesticide selection, application, mixing, loading, storage, and disposal; and estimates the personnel, operations, and equipment costs of the proposed program.

The weed district provides for the management of noxious weeds on all land or rights-of-way owned or controlled by the county within the district. Methods for such control shall include cultural, chemical, and biological methods. Noxious weeds are not permitted to propagate or go to seed. Compliance with the noxious weed management program is implemented through noxious weed management agreements.

For new subdivisions, noxious weed management provisions are included in the Subdivision Improvements Agreement signed by both the County and the developer.

When property is offered for sale, the person who owns the property shall notify the owner's agent and the purchaser of the existence or potential existence of noxious weeds on the property offered for sale.

### 7.1.21 Water and Sewer Districts **(MCA Title 7, Chapter 13, Part 22)**

Three county water and sewer districts have been organized and incorporated and managed as provided by state statute for Absarokee, Park City and Reed Point. The districts may construct, purchase, lease, or otherwise acquire, operate and maintain water rights, waterworks, sanitary sewer works, storm sewer works, canals, conduits, reservoirs, lands, and rights useful or necessary to store, conserve, supply, produce, convey, or drain water or sewage for purposes beneficial to the district.

Water and sewer districts can also prevent interference with or diminution of the natural flow of any stream or natural subterranean supply of water that is used or useful for any purpose of the district or that is a common benefit to the lands within the district; sell water or the use of water for household, domestic, or other similar purposes; sell sewer service, and, whenever there is a surplus of water or sewer works capacity, sell or otherwise dispose of the water or sewer works capacity to consumers located within or outside of the boundaries of the district; retain the services of architects and engineers for designing, preparing a feasibility study for, and drawing plans and specifications for a water or sewer system for the district; and establish, by ordinance or resolution, rules and regulations for the operation, maintenance, use, and availability of any of the district's systems or improvements, including but not limited to connection procedures, service termination, and the payment of rates and charges, including penalties and interest charges for delinquent accounts.

Each water and sewer district has a board of directors who are either elected or appointed by the Stillwater BOCC to serve the district. Water and sewer districts implement the goals and objectives identified for town sites and public facilities in cooperation with the county.

### 7.1.22 Cemetery Districts **(MCA Title 7, Chapter 35, Part 22)**

Cemetery districts may be created by petition when presented to the board of county commissioners of the county signed by not less than 20% of the citizens who are owners of land located within a proposed cemetery district, describe the boundaries of the proposed district and request that the territory within these boundaries be organized into a public cemetery district.

A cemetery district may contain the entire territory embraced within a county or any portion or subdivision thereof. The cemetery district must be governed and managed by trustees appointed by the board of county commissioners. In addition to the powers and duties established in the resolution creating a cemetery district, the district may maintain a cemetery or cemeteries within the district; hold title to property by grant, gift, devise, lease, or any other method; and perform other duties including the selling or leasing of burial lots.

There are currently three cemetery districts in Stillwater County. The Park City, Rapelje, and Rosebud Cemetery Districts. Interest has been expressed in creating a cemetery district for the Columbus area. Cemetery districts help implement the goals and objectives identified for town sites in cooperation with the county.

### 7.1.23 Conservation Districts **(MCA Title 7, Chapter 33, Parts 1 through 8)**

State statutes provide for the creation of conservation districts. They are created for the conservation of soil and soil resources; for the control and prevention of soil erosion; the prevention of floodwater and sediment damages; and furthering the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water. The districts serve to preserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare.

The county planning jurisdiction is within the Stillwater Conservation District.

### 7.1.24 Conservation Easements **(MCA Title 76, Chapter 6, Part 1)**

State statutes authorize public bodies and certain qualifying private organizations to voluntarily provide for the preservation of native plants or animals; biotic communities; geological or geographical formations of scientific, aesthetic, or educational interest; provide for the preservation of other significant open-space land either in perpetuity or for a term of years; and encourage private participation in such a program. Any qualified private organization may acquire a conservation easement, by purchase, by gift, devise, bequest, or grant title to any interest or interests in rights in real property, including land and water.

In order to minimize conflict with local comprehensive planning, all conservation easements are subject to review prior to recording by the appropriate local planning authority for the county within which the land lies. It shall be the responsibility of the entity acquiring the conservation easement to present the proposed conveyance of the conservation easement to the planning board to review and to comment upon the relationship of the proposed conveyance to comprehensive planning for the area. Such comments will not be binding on the proposed grantor or grantee but shall be advisory in nature. All conservation easements are recorded in the County where the land lies so as to affect their titles in the manner of other conveyances of interest in land and shall describe the land subject to the conservation easement by adequate legal description or by reference to a recorded plat showing its boundaries. The conservation easements recorded in Stillwater County at this time are shown on the Land Ownership Map.

### 7.1.25 County Planning and Zoning **(MCA Title 76, Chapter 2, Part 1)**

State statutes allow citizens to petition the County governing body to create planning and zoning districts for the purpose of furthering the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of the County. This process is called citizen petitioned, or Part 1, zoning. The County Planning Board, acting as the County Zoning Commission, adopts a development pattern for the physical and economic development of the planning and zoning district. The development pattern, with the accompanying maps, plats, charts, and descriptive matter, show the future uses of the land or buildings, height and bulk of future buildings, area of yards and other open spaces, building setback lines and other development allowed within the districts. The Planning Board can authorize and provide for the issuance of permits as a prerequisite to construction, alteration, or enlargement of any building or structure.

Planning and zoning districts or regulations adopted under this part cannot regulate lands used for grazing, horticulture, agriculture, or the growing of timber.

Stillwater County has one citizen petitioned (Part 1) planning and zoning district, the West Fork Stillwater Planning and Zoning District.

### 7.1.26 County Zoning **(MCA Title 76, Chapter 2, Part 2)**

State statutes also authorize the Board of County Commissioners to adopt zoning regulations for all or part of the jurisdiction for the purpose of promoting the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare. This is called county initiated, or Part 2, zoning. Zoning districts can be to specify future uses of the land or buildings, height and bulk of future buildings, area of yards and other open spaces, building setback lines, and other development allowed within the districts. The County Planning Board, acting as the zoning commission, can authorize and provide for the issuance of permits as a prerequisite to construction, alteration, or enlargement of any building or structure. Zoning regulations must be made with reasonable consideration, among other things, to the character of the district and its peculiar suitability for particular uses and with a view to conserving the value of buildings and encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout the jurisdictional area.

Development permit regulations can also be adopted under this Part. Regulations must be made in accordance with the growth policy and be designed to lessen congestion in the streets; secure safety from fire, panic, and other dangers; promote public health and general welfare; provide adequate light and air; prevent the overcrowding of land; avoid undue concentration of population; and facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks, and other public requirements. A resolution or rule adopted under the provisions of this part may not prevent the complete use, development, or recovery of any mineral, forest, or agricultural resources by the owner. A referendum vote is recommended before any proposed countywide zoning is implemented.

### 7.1.27 Interim Zoning

Interim zoning, as an emergency measure, is also authorized under Part 2. The Stillwater BOCC may adopt an interim zoning map or regulation as an emergency measure in order to promote public health, safety, morals, and general welfare if the purpose of the interim zoning map or regulation is to classify and regulate those uses and related matters that constitute the emergency.

### 7.1.28 County Park Districts **(MCA Title 7, Chapter 16, Part 24)**

A county park district may contain all or part of a county. The creation of a county park district may be initiated by petition or a resolution of intent adopted by the county governing body, calling for the creation of a county park district. Public notice, a public hearing and election are required to create a county park district. The Beartooth Park District was recently created in the southern part of the County, encompassing High School District #52.

A county park district has the authority necessary for the improvement, operation, maintenance, and administration of park and recreation land within the district. The county park district commission may lease, purchase, or contract for the purchase of buildings and facilities and equip, operate, and maintain the buildings and facilities; adopt by resolution rules for the operation and administration of all parks and recreational facilities under its control; collect charges for those services and facilities provided by the district that the commission considers necessary for the operation of the district; establish a property tax mill levy for the operation of the district; accept donations of land or recreational-type easements on land within the district for park or recreational purposes with the concurrence of the Stillwater BOCC.

### 7.1.29 Stillwater County Policies **(MCA Title 7, Chapter 5, Part 21)**

Stillwater County policies are adopted by resolution and are referenced in the minutes of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). Policies on appointed boards address the County Board of Health, Cemetery Board, County Tax Appeal Board, County Planning Board, City-County Planning Board, Five County Economic District, Solid Waste Board, Library Board, and the County Commissioner's office and meeting hours. Policies on fees address fees for road abandonment, road approaches, utility easements, road encroachment, road cut, solid waste rates, Treasurer's Office, Clerk and Recorder's Office, Sheriff's Office and daily confinement, and fairground use. Financial policies address budgeting, collateral checking and deposits of public money, expenditure of forest reserve funds, expenditure of gasoline and vehicle fuels tax, investments, expenditure of federal payments in lieu of taxes, purchasing equipment, tax refunds, governing fixed assets, county land planning funds, payroll and insurance, mileage, purchasing and processing claims, local option vehicle tax and credit card use. Personnel policies relate to a variety of personnel issues. Public safety policies address drug-free work place, floodplains, inspections, open burning, food and beverage sanitation requirements, nudity, weapons in the county courthouse, smoking in the county courthouse, fair housing, and fire seasons. Roads and bridge policies address road abandonment, car gates (cattle guards), road approaches, bridges, culverts, road

encroachments, new roads, public functions and street closures, road dedication, road maintenance, road cuts, rights-of-way, snow removal, utility easements, aircraft takeoffs and landing on public roads, speed limits on county roads, names for county roads, cattle guards, mailboxes, road permits, weight limits, and parking restrictions. Miscellaneous policies address hard rock mining impacts, junk vehicles recycling and disposal, public library, mental health, Absarokee sewer district, and solid waste. Contracted services policies address architectural, engineering and land surveying services. There is also a policy on contracts. Public Nuisance policies address weed equipment, chemicals, and other weed policies; mosquito control; dog control; and predatory animal control.

Land use planning policies include certificate of survey, parks and playgrounds, subdivisions; subdivisions conform to the Columbus Growth Policy, and evasion of the Subdivision and Platting Act.

Stillwater County utilizes County policies, regulations and other lawful measures to achieve the community goals and objectives. County policies are updated as needed.

### 7.1.30 Other Measures **(Montana Constitution, Montana Codes Annotated and Administrative Rules of Montana)**

In addition to the implementation measures described above; the Stillwater County BOCC and the Town of Columbus may utilize other implementation measures authorized by the Montana Constitution, Montana Codes Annotated, Administrative Rules of Montana, and local regulations as needed to achieve the goals and objectives established pursuant to 76-1-601 (2)(a), MCA.

## 7.2 PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

The strategy for development, maintenance, and replacement of public infrastructure for Stillwater County includes utilizing available planning, programming, budgeting, and accounting options allowed by law for drinking water systems, wastewater treatment facilities, sewer systems, solid waste facilities, fire protection facilities, roads, bridges, and other public infrastructure.

### 7.2.1 Stillwater County

Stillwater County has developed roads and bridges; water and sewer systems, a solid waste system; and public buildings, facilities, and equipment within the county's jurisdiction. Additional development of public infrastructure is addressed through capital improvement planning, subdivision improvements agreements, water and sewer districts, or other special districts. Replacement of public infrastructure is accomplished through the annual budgeting process utilizing fees, revenue bonds, grants, or other available funding options.

Maintenance of public infrastructure is also addressed in the annual budgeting process including setting fees, mill levies, and utilizing non-tax revenue to fund ongoing maintenance costs.

The County's strategy for development, maintenance, and replacement of public infrastructure is based on needs assessments, facility studies, economic development plans, growth policies, or other relevant information. The Stillwater BOCC evaluates and prioritizes requests for public infrastructure development, maintenance, and replacement received from County departments during their budgeting process in accordance with the Local Government Budget Act and other applicable laws. Public health and safety; Federal, State and local standards; costs and availability of funding are considered in the evaluation of each capital improvement project. Debt use is limited to long-term public infrastructure. The County utilizes Federal and State grants when possible. Other Districts and jurisdictions within Stillwater County are also responsible for public infrastructure.

### 7.2.2 Other Districts and Jurisdictions

The County strategy in relation to the development, maintenance, and replacement of public infrastructure controlled by other districts or jurisdictions within the County planning jurisdiction is to encourage unincorporated towns to manage their public infrastructure, including road development, through special districts to the extent possible.

The three water and sewer districts in Absarokee, Park City, and Reed Point own, operate, and maintain public water or sewer systems. Two rural special improvement districts (RSID 5 and 7) operate and maintain the Absarokee sewer system. There are four fire districts (Absarokee, Broadview, Columbus, and Park City) that own public buildings and equipment. In addition there is a Fire Department in Columbus and volunteer departments at Molt, Rapelje, Reed Point, and Nye. The three cemetery districts at Rapelje, Rosebud (Absarokee), and Park City, own, operate, and maintain public facilities. There are light districts in Park City, Absarokee, and Reedpoint. The Beartooth Park and Recreation District was formed in 2003 and is responsible for public park and recreation facilities in southern Stillwater County.

There is also a joint City-County Airport Board, County Library Board; County Solid Waste District; County Weed Board; Stillwater Community Hospital Board; and Stillwater Conservation District that have public infrastructure development, maintenance, and replacement responsibilities. In addition, there are nine elementary school districts (Absarokee, Broadview, Columbus, Fishtail, Molt, Nye, Park City, Rapelje, and Reed Point). There are six high school districts (Absarokee, Broadview, Columbus, Park City, Rapelje, and Reed Point).

### 7.2.3 State of Montana

The Montana Department of Transportation is responsible for the development, maintenance, and replacement of Interstate 90 and the frontage road (Old Highway 10), Montana primary Highway 78 (Donald M. Ruhl Memorial Highway), secondary Highway

302 (Molt Road), secondary Highway 306 (Rapelje Road), secondary Highway 419 (Nye Road), secondary Highway 420 (Stillwater Road), secondary Highway 421 (Joliet Road), off system bridges, and other property within the County planning jurisdiction.

The County strategy in relation to the development, maintenance, and replacement of public infrastructure controlled by the State of Montana is to communicate local community needs, issues, and concerns; participate in State planning and programming of State public infrastructure; and coordinate and cooperate on State highway, bridge, or other projects.

## 7.3 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Section 76-1-601(2)(f), MCA, requires an implementation strategy that includes a timetable for implementing a Growth Policy; lists conditions that will lead to the revision of the growth policy; and a timetable for reviewing the Growth Policy at least every five years.

### 7.3.1 Timetable for implementing the growth policy

Implementation of the Growth Policy will begin after adoption by the Stillwater BOCC, and, will remain in effect until it is revised or repealed. The Stillwater BOCC and the Columbus Town Council are guided by and give consideration to the general policy and pattern of development set out in the Growth Policy for public infrastructure, adoption of subdivision regulations, and zoning ordinances or resolutions.

Implementation is an ongoing process and will be emphasized annually during the budget process for guidance on public infrastructure decisions and funding of public services. Revision will occur whenever the applicable policies, regulations, or other measures are adopted or revised.

### 7.3.2 Conditions that lead to a revision of the growth policy

Conditions that will lead to a revision of the growth policy are:

- Public initiative or referendum to change the growth policy.
- One or more neighborhood plans are adopted.
- Significant changes in community goals and objectives occur.
- Significant change to existing conditions or population that deviate more than ten percent from the projected trends in the growth policy.
- Significant change in the pattern of development within the jurisdictional area.

- Statutory changes that affect the growth policy, subdivision review criteria, public infrastructure, or other elements of the growth policy.

- Majority of Planning Board members or the BOCC request revisions.

The process of revising the Growth Policy would then begin after one or more of the conditions listed above have been identified. The planning staff, Planning Board and the BOCC will coordinate and cooperate in the effort to revise the Growth Policy.

### 7.3.3 Timetable for reviewing the growth policy

The Growth Policy will be reviewed at least once every five years by the planning staff and Planning Board as required in 76-1-601, MCA. A recommendation will be made to the BOCC whether or not revisions to the Growth Policy are necessary. The Growth Policy will be revised at least once every ten years after the Census information becomes available.

## 7.4 Statement of Coordination and Cooperation

Stillwater County will coordinate and cooperate with the Town of Columbus in matters relating to the Stillwater County Growth Policy through participation in mutual aid and interlocal agreements. The jurisdiction of the County Planning Board includes all of Stillwater County except the incorporated limits of the Town of Columbus and the unincorporated area outside the town limits as described in resolutions adopted by Stillwater County and the Town of Columbus.

The Stillwater BOCC appoints at least five members to the County Planning Board. One member has to be from the board of supervisors of the Conservation District. The County and City-County Planning Boards are designated by County resolution to review and make recommendations on subdivisions.

In relation to the Stillwater County Growth Policy and any subsequent revisions and updates, Stillwater County will cooperate and coordinate with the Town of Columbus as necessary by:

- Utilizing interlocal agreements provided for by State statutes to specify roles, responsibilities, and funding of shared facilities and services.

- Coordinating and combining functions on the joint Airport Board and the Airport Zoning Commission. By communications among elected officials and appointed staff, the County shall attempt to maintain consistency and integrity of planning efforts with those of the Town.

- Collaborating and sharing certain staff and staff functions, such as with the planning staff, emergency vehicle dispatch, environmental health,

volunteer fire departments, the County and Town shall attempt to coordinate efforts to achieve best responsiveness and effectiveness for the citizens of this area.

- Providing Town officials and staff opportunities to review and comment on proposed growth policy implementation tools, including subdivision and floodplain regulations, and which may include others that have been identified as having a material affect on unincorporated areas within the planning jurisdiction. .

The County coordinates and cooperates with the Town on identified public facilities and services of common interest, including airport, disaster and emergency services, fire protection, law enforcement, planning, and grants administration as allowed by State law.

This statement of coordination and cooperation is intended to identify current strategies utilized at this time. Other opportunities for future intergovernmental cooperation and coordination may be pursued as authorized by the Montana Constitution, laws, rules, regulations, or interlocal agreements.

## 7.5 Statement on Subdivision Review Criteria

### 7.5.1 Subdivision Review Criteria

Section 76-3-601 (2)(h), MCA, requires a statement explaining how governing bodies will define, evaluate, and make decisions regarding proposed subdivisions. Section 76-3-608 (3)(a), MCA, establishes six primary criteria for local government review of subdivisions. These primary criteria are: effects on agriculture; agricultural water user facilities; the natural environment; effects on wildlife and wildlife habitat; effects on local services; and effects on public health and safety. Definitions of the criteria along with explanation of evaluation and decision making regarding proposed subdivisions follows:

#### 7.5.1.1 Effect on Agriculture

Agriculture is defined as 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.

Evaluation criteria to determine effects on agriculture include:

1. Subdivisions contiguous to unincorporated town sites or within the Columbus City-County Planning jurisdiction will likely have minimal effects on agriculture.

2. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed on prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance as defined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service will have adverse effects on agriculture.

3. The first minor subdivision from a tract of record will likely have minimal effects on agriculture.

4. The second and subsequent minor subdivisions from a tract of record are considered to have potential adverse effects on agriculture when the proposed subdivision predominately (>50%) borders land classified as agricultural or timberland by Montana Department of Revenue or state trust lands.

5. Major subdivisions are considered to have potential adverse effects on agriculture when the proposed subdivision predominately (>50%) borders land classified as agricultural or timberland.

6. Subdivisions proposed in areas adjacent to agricultural lands as classified by Montana Department of Revenue, state or federal lands in the county are considered to have potential weed problems and an adverse effect on agriculture. These adverse impacts may be mitigated with weed management plans submitted with subdivision applications and that are evaluated for compliance with the Stillwater County Weed Management Plan.

7. Compatibility with adjacent agricultural use, right to farm and herd district issues are evaluated in the subdivision review process. Adverse effects of subdivisions on agriculture may be mitigated by designs including, but not limited to cluster development, open space buffers, shelterbelts adjacent to neighboring agricultural lands or other site specific mitigation measures proposed by the subdivider or determined in the review process.

#### 7.5.1.2 Effect on Agricultural Water User Facilities

Agricultural water user facilities are defined as those facilities which provide water for irrigation or stock watering to agricultural lands for the production of agricultural products. These facilities include, but are not limited to, ditches, head gates, pipes, and other water conveying facilities.

Evaluation to determine effects on agriculture water user facilities includes:

1. Subdivisions proposed on land with agricultural water user facilities or adjoining an agricultural water user facility are considered to have potential adverse effects on the agricultural water user facilities.

2. Subdivision designs that include abandonment and removal of water rights and all agricultural water user facilities, when the facilities are no longer in use in compliance with 76-3-504, MCA, and, the Stillwater County and the Town of Columbus Subdivision Regulations, will have minimal effect on agricultural water user facilities on a county wide basis.

3. Adverse effects of subdivisions on agriculture water user facilities are evaluated for compliance with 76-3-504, MCA, and the Stillwater County and Town of

Columbus Subdivision Regulations which require disclosure that adequately notifies potential buyers and providing a minimum of 20 feet wide easements for maintenance of the facilities, if the facilities are still in use for agricultural purposes.

4. Adverse effects of subdivisions on agricultural water user facilities may be mitigated by site specific mitigation measures proposed by the subdivider; or determined in the review process as conditions of approval, which may include but are not limited to piping, fencing or alternative barriers; or mitigated by agreement with persons, irrigation districts, private or public entities or other parties entitled to the water from an affected agricultural water user facility with mutually acceptable mitigation measures.

### 7.5.13 Effect on Local Services

Local Services means any and all services that local government entities, or public or private utilities are authorized to provide for the benefit of their citizens.

Evaluation to determine effects on local services include:

1. Subdivisions contiguous to unincorporated town sites or within the Columbus City-County planning jurisdiction are considered to potentially effect local services, including but not limited to water, sewer, storm drainage, street or solid waste facilities. Proposed mitigation of adverse effects through a subdivision improvements agreement and guarantees is evaluated based on state standards and cost estimates. Lack of public service and/or facility capacity to adequately serve a subdivision may be reason for denial of proposed subdivisions when adverse effects are not mitigated.

2. Major subdivisions located outside the Columbus City-County planning jurisdiction or a Census Designated Place of Absarokee, Park City or Reed Point are generally considered to have adverse effects on local services.

3. The first minor subdivision from a tract of record will likely have a negligible effect on local services.

4. A second or subsequent minor subdivision from a tract of record is generally considered to have adverse effects on local services that require additional evaluation for cumulative effects.

5. Major subdivisions are likely to have effects on traffic and require a transportation accessibility study to determine any adverse effects and mitigating measures.

6. A second or subsequent minor subdivision is likely to have effects on traffic and require a transportation accessibility study to determine any adverse cumulative effects and mitigating measures.

7. Subdivisions with access across a bridge require an evaluation, report and certification from a structural engineer on the capacity of the bridge, any adverse effects of subdivision traffic (including construction traffic), and proposed mitigating measures.

8. Subdivisions proposed in locations contiguous to existing utilities are likely to have minimal effect on utility services.

9. Subdivisions proposed in locations that are not contiguous to existing utilities are considered to have an effect on utility services and must be evaluated for availability of the service or practical alternatives.

10. Effects of subdivisions on local services may be mitigated through a subdivision improvements agreement with financial guarantees. The improvements agreement must address and guarantee construction of all on site improvements. It must also provide for payment or other means of assistance to all effected units of local government, on a proportionate share basis, for all required off site improvements. The proportionate share will be determined on a per capita basis for minor subdivisions or by a case study method for major subdivisions using the most current information available.

11. Adverse effects of subdivisions on public facilities and services provided by fire districts, water and sewer districts, other affected units of local government or utilities may be mitigated site specific mitigation measures proposed by the subdivider; mitigation may be determined in the review process as conditions of approval, including but not limited to any mutual agreements between the subdivider and affected units of local government or utilities.

## Effect on Natural Environment:

The natural environment is defined as: The physical conditions which exist within a given area, including land, water, mineral, flora, fauna, noise, light and objects of historic and aesthetic significance.

Evaluation to determine effects on natural environment includes:

1. Subdivisions that are contiguous to unincorporated town sites or within the Columbus City-County planning jurisdiction and utilize available public water, sewer, streets, storm drainage, and solid waste facilities, and other public services or extension of existing facilities and services are likely to have a negligible effect on the natural environment.

2. Any portion of subdivisions or associated improvements proposed within a 100-year floodplain, as defined in the Stillwater County Floodplain Regulations and by Flood Insurance Rate Maps. Also subdivisions containing riparian areas, or adjacent rivers, streams, lakes or other natural surface water are considered to have potential adverse effects on the natural environment.

3. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed on land with a high water table (less than 4 feet from the surface), and on wetlands or groundwater recharge areas are considered to have an adverse effect on the natural environment.

4. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed on land with evidence of soils with building or site development limitations as defined by the Soil Survey of Stillwater County, or on landslides or slopes greater than 25 percent are considered to have potential adverse effects on the natural environment.

5. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed on land with historic, cultural, archaeological or paleontological features are considered to have potential adverse effects on the natural environment.

6. Adverse effects of subdivisions on the natural environment may be mitigated by designs that incorporate natural features into open space areas, site specific mitigation measures proposed by state or federal agencies or site specific mitigation measures based on detailed scientific studies.

   These important natural environment features include rivers, streams, lakes, or other natural surface water; riparian areas, 25 percent slopes, areas with soils limitations, landslide areas; or include100 year floodplain areas, wetlands, high groundwater areas, groundwater recharge areas, historic, cultural, archaeological or paleontological features; designs.

## Effect on Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat:

Wildlife means animals that are not domesticated or tamed, and wildlife habitat means the place or area where wildlife naturally lives.

Evaluation to determine effects on wildlife and wildlife habitat includes:

1. Subdivisions that are contiguous to unincorporated town sites or within the Columbus City-County planning jurisdiction are generally considered to have a minimal effect on wildlife and wildlife habitat.

2. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed in riparian areas or on land with wetlands are generally considered to have an adverse effect on wildlife and wildlife habitat.

3. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed in areas with rare or endangered wildlife species, migration routes, or critical wildlife habitat identified by state or federal agencies, either on the land to be subdivided or adjoining lands, are considered to have adverse effects on wildlife or wildlife habitat.

4. Adverse effects of subdivisions on wildlife and wildlife habitat may be mitigated by designs, including but not limited to cluster development with open space

buffers that protect the wildlife and wildlife habitat or by agreement with state and/or federal wildlife management agencies on mutually acceptable mitigation measures for rare or endangered wildlife species or critical wildlife habitat.

## Effect on Public Health and Safety:

Public health and safety is defined as 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, rock falls 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.

Evaluation to determine effects on public health and safety includes:

1. Subdivisions that are contiguous to unincorporated town sites or within the Columbus City-County planning jurisdiction and utilize available public water, sewer, streets, storm drainage, solid waste facilities, other public services and utilities are considered to have a negligible effect on public health and safety.

2. Subdivisions proposed in areas identified as a high fire hazard area by a fire district, department, company, or state or federal agency are considered to have adverse effects on public health and safety.

3. Portions of subdivisions or associated improvements proposed within a 100-year floodplain as defined in the Stillwater County Floodplain Regulations and by Flood Insurance Rate Maps are considered to have potential adverse effects on public health and safety.

4. Subdivisions proposed for mobile home parks or recreational vehicle parks in areas subject to high winds greater than 60 miles per hour are considered to have potential adverse effects on public health and safety.

5. Subdivisions proposed in areas identified as an airport influence area or that could result in an obstruction in the areas identified on an airspace plan approved by the Federal Aviation Administration are considered to have potential adverse effects on public health and safety.

6. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed on land with high pressure gas lines or high voltage lines present are considered to have potential adverse effects on public health and safety.

7. Proposed subdivision plans for water supply systems, sewage treatment systems, storm drainage and solid waste collection and disposal submitted with the subdivision application will be evaluated during preliminary plat or summary review for adverse effects on public health and safety. Evaluation criteria used

are the rules, regulations, standards and guidelines of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and Stillwater County Board of Health.

8. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed on land with or adjacent to Superfund or hazardous waste sites are considered to result in an adverse effect on public health and safety.

9. Subdivisions or associated improvements proposed on land with abandoned landfills, mines, wells, or waste sites are considered to result in an adverse effect on public health and safety.

10. Subdivisions proposed on land adjacent to solid waste sites, sewage treatment plants, feed lots or other facilities with offensive odors, or uses with high noise levels are considered to result in potential adverse effects on public health and safety.

11. Subdivisions proposed on land containing soils with the potential for high levels of radon, pesticides, herbicides, insecticides; buried tanks; or other pollutants are considered to result in potential adverse effects on public health and safety.

12. Adverse effects of subdivisions on public health and safety may be mitigated by designs that mitigate potential public health and safety issues in compliance with local, state and federal requirements. Proposed mitigation measures based on detailed studies by qualified professionals are used to evaluate proposed subdivisions.

### 7.5.2 Subdivision Evaluation and Decision Making:

The governing bodies evaluate and make decisions on proposed subdivisions utilizing primary review criteria defined above and the following statutory requirements.

- Compliance with the survey requirements required by state law;

- Compliance with local subdivision regulations, and the review procedures of the subdivision regulations;

- Provision of easements for the location and installation of any planned utilities;

- Legal and physical access to each parcel within the subdivision and the notation of that access on the applicable plat and any instrument transferring the parcel;

- Assurance that all required public improvements will be installed before final plat approval, or that their installation after final plat approval will be guaranteed as provided by the Stillwater County and Town of Columbus Subdivision Regulations. A local government may require a subdivider to pay or guarantee payment for part or all of the costs of extending capital facilities related to public health and safety, including but not limited to public roads, sewer lines, water

supply lines, and storm drains to a subdivision. The costs must reasonably reflect the expected impacts directly attributable to the subdivision;

- Compliance with the requirements of section 76-3-504 and the Stillwater County and Town of Columbus Subdivision Regulations, MCA, regarding the disclosure and disposition of water rights; as provided in section 76-3-510, MCA.

- Any annexation and zoning issues are considered concurrently with subdivision review.

The basis for the governing body's decision to approve, conditionally approve, or disapprove a subdivision is whether the preliminary plat application, applicable environmental assessment, public hearing, planning board recommendations, or additional information demonstrates the development of the subdivision will meet regulatory requirements and reasonably minimize potentially significant adverse impacts. When requiring mitigation the governing body consults with the subdivider and gives due weight and consideration to the expressed preference of the subdivider.

Unmitigated impacts of a proposed development may be unacceptable and may preclude approval of the subdivision plat. In reaching a decision, the governing body issues written findings of fact that weigh the criteria in Section 76-3-608 (3)(a), MCA; which includes the effects of a proposed subdivision on agriculture, agricultural water user facilities, the natural environment, wildlife and wildlife habitat, local services, and effects on pubic health and safety.

## 7.6 Statement on Public Hearings Regarding Proposed Subdivisions:

This section 76-3-605 MCA requires the governing body or its designated agency to hold a public hearing on the preliminary plat when required. The governing bodies have authorized the planning boards to hold public hearings to consider all relevant evidence relating to public health, safety, and welfare, including the environmental assessment to determine whether the preliminary plat should be approved, conditionally approved, or disapproved by the governing body. The planning boards act in an advisory capacity and submit written recommendations to the governing body.

The required public hearing for a subdivision proposal will be held before the Planning Board as stated in the subdivision regulations. The format for a subdivision public hearing is as follows:

- The public hearing notice will be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the county as required by state law and the Stillwater County and Town of Columbus Subdivision Regulations.

- The subdivider and property owners immediately adjoining the exterior boundaries of the proposed subdivision are notified of the public hearing by certified mail.

- The public hearing will be conducted at the time, date and place advertised. Public hearings are held in a location near the proposed subdivision whenever possible.

- People attending the public hearing are requested to sign an attendance sheet. Public hearings may be recorded or documented with minutes for the hearing.

- The planning board chair usually conducts public hearings and gives an introduction on the purpose of the public hearing.

- A presentation of the proposed subdivision is made at the public hearing by the subdivider or an authorized representative(s).

- A staff report and findings on the primary review criteria are presented by planning staff on the preliminary plat and environmental assessment if required by the Stillwater County and Town of Columbus Subdivision Regulations.

- Questions and comments on the proposed subdivision are received after the presentations. Participants are encouraged to state their name, place of residence and whether they are in favor or opposed to the proposed subdivision and give the reasons for their position. Those who are neither in favor of nor opposed to the proposed subdivision, but have comments, may state that position and provide comments as well. Both verbal and written comments are accepted.

- The public hearing is adjourned when there is no further public comment.

- When a proposed subdivision is also proposed to be annexed to the Town of Columbus, the Town Council shall hold joint hearings on the preliminary plat and annexation whenever possible.

Public hearings and associated notice requirements are included in the Montana Code Annotated. The Subdivision Regulations are revised periodically to remain current with statutory changes or other legal requirements.

# CHAPTER 8: NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS RECOMMENDED

## Recommendation for Neighborhood Plans:

Statutory authority for neighborhood plans is Montana Code Annotated 76-1-601 (4) which specifies a growth policy may include one or more neighborhood plans. A neighborhood plan must be consistent with the growth policy.

Neighborhood plans are being recommended as future addendums to this growth policy because of the diversity of Stillwater County, variety of community issues identified in resident surveys and community forums, and to effectively address specific community needs. The following table shows the primary issues identified for each community during the most recent citizen participation process. Detailed results of citizen surveys are presented in Appendix A.

| **Issues** | Absarokee | Columbus | Fishtail | Molt | Nye-Dean | Park City | Rapelje | Reed Point |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Economic Development | X | X | | X | | X | X | X |
| Subdivision Fees | X | | X | | X | X | | |
| Protect Right to Farm | X | | X | | | | | |
| Property Rights | X | | X | | X | | | |
| Infrastructure and Services | X | X | | X | | X | X | X |
| Subdivisions design-location | | X | X | | | | | |
| Stream bank Setbacks | X | | | | X | | | |
| Improve water quality | | | | X | | X | | |

Minimum criteria defining the jurisdictional area for a neighborhood plan must be established. It is recommended the elementary school district boundaries established within Stillwater County be used to define the jurisdictional area for neighborhood plans.

Each future neighborhood plan must address the subdivision review criteria in Montana Code Annotated 76-3-608(3)(a); the definitions and review criteria included in this growth policy are recommended for inclusion in future neighborhood plans to evaluate the effect of subdivision on the agriculture, agricultural water user facilities, local services, natural environment, wildlife and wildlife habitat, public health and safety; describe any zoning regulations that will be implemented to address these criteria; and identify geographic areas where the governing body intends to authorize an exemption from review of the criteria for proposed subdivisions.

## 8.1 Absarokee Area Issues

The following issues were identified for the community of Absarokee and surrounding rural area with survey results, community forum held at the Cobblestone Center in 2002 and written comments received.

### Establish infrastructure to support growth

This issue anticipates the needs of future growth by expanding roads, bridges, schools, water, sewer other and services to accommodate growth at the same pace in which it occurs.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Request the County incorporate Absarokee's infrastructure needs into a Capital Improvements Plan, Road and Bridge plans and other planning documents.

- Encourage Schools, Water & Sewer District, and Fire District to also plan for future capital improvement needs and participate in subdivision review process.

- Request state or federal grant assistance to prepare facility studies for capital facilities that have not been evaluated recently.

- Revise the subdivision review criteria in the Subdivision Regulations to assure that all necessary facilities and utilities required to serve subdivisions are constructed or guaranteed before a subdivision is platted. This includes on-site improvements and proportionate share of off-site improvements.

- Revise the subdivision review criteria in the Subdivision Regulations to require transportation accessibility studies for any major, second or subsequent subdivision. Bridge evaluations, reports and certification should also be required when affected.

### Find a balance between property rights and regulating development

This issue reflects a stated concern that an owner has a right to retain several options for the possible future use of property. The Absarokee workshop attendants were concerned that area agricultural operators – who inadvertently provide the community with much of its open space resource – may be regulated out of business by future land use restrictions. On the other hand, there was concern expressed that those same agricultural property owners would be impacted from new subdivision developments.

No action items were proposed that would address this issue. It was stated more as a matter of policy. While it was understood that some restrictions may need to be placed on certain land uses in the future, in order to reduce the most offensive potential impacts to adjoining properties, such restrictions should not unduly restrict property rights. A balance between regulation and property rights is desirable.

### Protect water quality by requiring stream setbacks

It was noted that local residents consider Stillwater County's streams and rivers a major asset. It was also noted that development should be required to be set back a minimum distance from stream banks, in order to protect water quality as well as the visual resource when viewed from the river.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Amend the Subdivision Regulations review criteria to allow setbacks from rivers, streams and other natural surface water as a mitigating measure for proposed building sites in subdivisions with or adjacent natural surface water.

- Request the County Board of Health consider adopting setback requirements for wells and septic systems. Then recommend setback standards when updating local health regulations.

- Consider stream setback regulation in the neighborhood planning process to establish a minimum setback for all new structures in the Absarokee area.

### Establish subdivisions impact fees

There was a strong sentiment that the public should not be subsidizing subdivision activity through upgrades in infrastructure. It was generally agreed that the concept of subdivision impact fees or a flat fee paid to cover the future expense of expanding services was desirable.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Research legal authority to establish subdivision impact fees.

- Amend the County Subdivision Regulations to include subdivision review criteria that all necessary on-site improvements and proportionate share of off-site improvements required to serve subdivisions are constructed or guaranteed before a subdivision is platted.

- Update subdivision improvement agreement requirements in Subdivision Regulations, if necessary.

- Require a per capita cost basis for minor subdivisions or a more detailed case study method for major subdivisions.

### Seek more economic variety, jobs

This issue supports economic development efforts in the form of encouraging diversity among the community's business types, while also encouraging the development of more jobs within the community – particularly well-paying jobs for local youth.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Actively participate in state, regional and local economic development efforts to promote existing businesses, tourism, and encourages new businesses to locate here.

- Utilize metal mines license tax revenue effectively for planning and economic development.

## 8.2 Columbus Area Issues

The following neighborhood issues and action items were identified for the Columbus area with survey results, community forum held at the Town Hall in Columbus in 2002 and written comments received.

### Seek rational growth – close to town and services

It was noted that development is more efficient when located in proximity to town services such as roads, water, and sewer. It was also noted that impacts to service providers – and particularly to emergency services – are minimized when development occurs close to established towns. Incentives to encourage development close to established towns were supported.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Establish incentives that encourage subdivision activity close to established towns by exempting them from portions of environmental assessments and subdivision review criteria.

- Support proposed annexations, subdivisions, or zone changes to allow high-density development near established towns.

- Revise subdivision review criteria to minimize or mitigate subdivisions proposed in rural agricultural areas.

- Define an airport influence area and establish regulations to protect public safety as an the investment in the city-county airport.

### Intensify subdivision review for new projects

A strong desire was expressed to make sure that future subdivisions are reviewed more thoroughly for impacts to adjoining properties and effects on the Columbus area.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Amend the County Health Regulations to add standards protecting existing wells on adjacent properties to better protect well water levels, recharge rates, and the overall availabity of groundwater to existing wells on adjacent properties.

- Amend the County Health Regulations to allow for more authority to require engineered community septic systems for lots below a certain size, or where soil conditions are marginal to support individual septic systems.

- Amend the County Health Regulations to allow for more authority to require community domestic water systems for lots below a certain size, or where groundwater supplies are marginal to support individual domestic wells.

### Seek new businesses with low environmental impact

This issue encourages the County to be more active in attracting new businesses that generate few impacts to the natural environment. These may be manufacturing businesses, but ones that do not produce substantial amounts of byproducts that could impact local air or water quality. A greater variety in retail commercial activity, professional offices, and tourist-based businesses would also work toward addressing this issue.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Permit installation of DSL and other high-speed digital telecommunication technology in public right-of-way, on or across public lands wherever feasible.

- Actively participate in state, regional and local economic development efforts to promote existing businesses, tourism, and encourages new businesses to locate here.

### Plan ahead for new infrastructure

This issue promotes the expansion of infrastructure and services to anticipate the growth of the Columbus area.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Coordinate and cooperate with federal, state and other local governments in capital improvement planning for all public facilities in the Columbus area.

- Support petitions for annexation of wholly surrounded or adjacent properties to allow the Town of Columbus to extend existing infrastructure.

- Support proposed annexations, subdivisions, or zone changes to allow land north of Columbus to be converted to residential use and land east of Columbus to be converted to industrial uses.

- Support a procedure for notifying future buyers of properties within the Airport Influence Area that their property is in proximity to a general aviation airport.

## 8.3 Fishtail Area Issues

The following issues were identified for the community of Fishtail and surrounding rural area with survey results, community forum held at the Community Center in Fishtail in 2002 and written comments received.

### Protect the natural ecology of the Fishtail area

There was a strong concern that the major asset of the Fishtail area was its natural environment, and there were concerns expressed that future growth and development in this area should not diminish this environment.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Amend the Subdivision Regulations to strengthen requirements for information on solid waste, storm water runoff, septic systems, and wells with the subdivision application for preliminary plat review.

- Amend the Subdivision Regulations to include more stringent review criteria for location, design, improvements and incentives for cluster development in rural subdivisions.

- Consider stream setback regulation in the neighborhood planning process to establish a minimum setback for all new construction, and the storage of debris, abandoned vehicles, or other potential contaminants in the Fishtail area.

- Encourage economic development that is compatible with the rural character of the area.

### Protect property rights in the Fishtail area

There was a strong stated sentiment to make sure that no policies or actions would prohibit an individuals' right to use their property. Exceptions include those land uses or development that would clearly have a detrimental impact on adjacent properties or the community as a whole.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Review the Subdivision Regulations to insure any required property rights language is included and any future regulations affecting new development and land use to verify property owner's rights are addressed in compliance with current law.

### Protect agriculture's "right to farm" in the Fishtail area

There was a strongly stated concern that agriculture is a significant part of the local economy and the rural lifestyle of the Fishtail area, as well as the major provider of open space. There was a concern that farmers and ranchers in the area have been impacted by recent subdivision activity, as well as demands for legal access to previously landlocked

properties.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Amend the Subdivision Regulations to define "agriculture" and revise the review criteria for effects on agriculture, including potential impacts to adjoining agricultural operations resulting from the proposed subdivision. These include protections under the right to farm law.

- Request legal review of any public notice that properties adjacent to agricultural lands cannot expect relief from agricultural practices such as dust, noise, irrigation, the spraying of pesticides or herbicides, or late-night agricultural operations with reference to the right-to-farm law.

### Use positive incentives to guide the location of development

A desire was expressed to reduce residential sprawl by encouraging new subdivisions to locate closer to the community of Fishtail.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Prioritize development of public facilities, infrastructure and services in established communities.

- Amend the Subdivision Regulations to include less stringent review criteria for subdivisions located adjacent existing town sites.

- Amend the Subdivision Regulations to include incentives for cluster development.

- Amend the Subdivision Regulations to include proportionate share payments for off-site improvements to subdivisions.

### Establish impact fees for subdivisions in the Fishtail area

A concern was expressed that subdivision impact fees should be established in order to better address the impact of new residential development on public services such as fire protection. It is possible that local schools could also benefit from such a mechanism.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Research legal authority to establish subdivision impact fees.

- Amend the County Subdivision Regulations to include subdivision review criteria that require all necessary on-site improvements and proportionate share of off-site improvements to serve the subdivision are constructed or guaranteed.

- Update subdivision improvement agreement requirements in Subdivision Regulations to cover on site improvements and proportionate share payments or other means of assistance for off-site improvements.
- Require a per capita cost basis for minor subdivisions or a more detailed case study method for major subdivisions.

## 8.4 Molt Area Issues

The following issues were identified for the community of Molt and surrounding rural area with survey results, community forum held at the Molt Community Center in 2002 and written comments received.

### Economic development, services, new businesses

There was concern that improved services in the Molt area would generate new development, and attract new businesses to locate to town. Such businesses would take advantage of paved access to Billings and would serve new residential development to the south and east.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Request the Beartooth R, C & D provide a description of available federal and state grants that could fund the design and construction of community facilities.

- Investigate the feasibility of forming a Water & Sewer District (or Improvements District) for the Molt community.

### Improved area roads

A desire was expressed that the County roads in and around the Molt area receive more maintenance and be more improved from their present condition. These are all unpaved roads.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Request the Road Department investigate the feasibility of forming an Improvements District for the purpose of funding and constructing paved roads within the community of Molt.

- Request the Road Department and County Commissioners review maintenance priorities for unpaved roads in the immediate area of the Molt with the community leaders.

### Investigate feasibility of a water system

The notion of a public water system for the community of Molt was very well received, although it was understood that the present-day population of the community may not be able to cover the cost of operating such a system at this time. The facility could be as

simple as a large community well and distribution system, which may be adequate enough to overcome the water availability and quality issues in the area.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Request the Beartooth R, C & D identify grant funding for a feasibility study and preliminary engineering for a basic community well system for the town site of Molt.

- Survey the community to determine amount of interest in forming, funding, operating and maintaining a Water District or Water & Sewer District.

## 8.5 Nye Area Issues

The following issues were identified for the Nye area from survey results, community forum held at the Nye School in 2002 and written comments received.

### Enhance and protect water quality

It was noted that groundwater quality, particularly that for domestic use, is a primary resource in the Nye-Dean area. Furthermore, there are factors such as septic system construction and coal-bed methane development that can adversely impact such groundwater resources.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Amend the Subdivision Regulations to strengthen requirements for information on solid waste, storm water runoff, septic systems, and wells with the subdivision application for preliminary plat review.

- Strengthen criteria in local health regulations affecting the approval of septic systems. Older non-compliant septic systems should be identified and replaced or corrected.

- Pursue consistency in the application of well and septic system standards by sanitarians and County Health Board.

- Identify the potential for impacts to groundwater quality due to the development of coal-bed methane gas resources.

- Collect existing information on location, depth, and flow rates to identify depths for future wells attempting to access groundwater resources with consideration for water quality and quantity in domestic applications.

### Protect property rights

A strong concern was expressed by Nye-Dean residents that measures proposed by the planning process should not adversely impact the rights of property owners in the area. It was noted that the open space consists largely of private land and working ranches. It

was strongly felt that the owners of private ranch lands should not be punished by the land use planning process.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Review the Subdivision Regulations to insure any required property rights language is included and any future regulations affecting new development and land use to verify property owner's rights are addressed in compliance with current law.

- Amend the Subdivision Regulations to include review criteria addressing for location, design, improvements and incentives for cluster development or densities in rural subdivisions that are complimentary to the surrounding area.

- Maintain the integrity of the Nye-Dean area by development standards that reflect the character of the area in neighborhood plans and regulations.

- Adopt development standards for reviewing proposed projects that are based on the size and scale of the proposal in relation to the surrounding area.

### Protect and maintain rural quality of life

It was recognized that the Nye-Dean area enjoys a unique quality of life, marked by rural lifestyle, ranching traditions, access to rivers and streams, and stunning views of the Beartooths. There was a great deal of concern expressed about how to protect each of these attributes from being eroded by future subdivision and development.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Consider stream setback regulation in the neighborhood planning process to establish a minimum setback for all new construction, and the storage of debris, abandoned vehicles, or other potential contaminants in the Nye-Dean area.

- Amend the Subdivision Regulations to include review criteria for location, design, improvements and incentives for cluster development in rural subdivisions or densities compatible with the surrounding area.

- Review Subdivision Regulations to insure existing diversity, variety in lot sizes and housing types in Nye-Dean area are allowed to continue.

- Amend the Subdivision Regulations to define "agriculture" and revise the review criteria for effects on agriculture, including potential impacts to adjoining agricultural operations resulting from the proposed subdivision. These include protections under the right to farm law.

### Improve quality of new development

There was a concern that new development and new subdivision activity would continue to erode the existing character of the Nye-Dean area. It was stated that efforts could be

made to guarantee future development would be more compatible with the area if certain standards were adopted.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Request County Attorney research legal authority to establish subdivision impact fees.

- Amend the County Subdivision Regulations to include subdivision review criteria that all necessary on-site improvements and proportionate share of off-site improvements required to serve subdivisions are constructed or guaranteed before a subdivision is platted.

- Update subdivision improvement agreement requirements in Subdivision Regulations to cover on site improvements and proportionate share payments or other means of assistance for off-site improvements.

- Require a per capita cost basis for minor subdivisions or a more detailed case study method for major subdivisions.

- Update design standards for internal roads in new subdivisions to minimize the number of individual driveways accessing a public road or highway.

- Establish design standards for new development that protect the existing rural character of the Nye-Dean area.

### Improve Infrastructure and Services

Residents of the Nye-Dean area expressed a desire that certain public services be improved. It was noted that it is often desirable to be remote from the County seat in Columbus, but also that this should not result in justifying a poor level of service.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Request Sheriff's Department review patrol schedule for the Nye-Dean area to improve service, act as a deterrent and reduce response times in the event of an emergency.

- Support improved response times for Absarokee/Nye Fire Departments and Absarokee Ambulance with enhanced 911 services and mutual aid agreements among emergency service providers.

## 8.6 Park City Area Issues

The following issues were identified for the community of Park City and surrounding

rural area from survey results, community forum held at the Park City School in 2002 and written comments received.

### Look into feasibility of incorporation

A strong community interest was expressed in favor of incorporating the community of Park City. It was generally felt that it would be desirable to investigate such incorporation, and determine objectively what are the advantages and disadvantages.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Request assistance from MSU to conduct a study that quantifies the financial impacts of incorporation for Park City in cooperation with the Park City Development Council and the County.

### Seek agricultural related businesses to create jobs

It was stated that the most-desirable type of industry to develop in the Park City area would be one which takes a locally-produced agricultural product and produces one or more refined products for specialized markets, adding value while creating jobs and helping local agricultural producers.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Identify those local services which are unprepared to accommodate future business growth, and which act as disincentives to locating businesses in Park City in the neighborhood planning process.

- Request assistance from Beartooth RC&D, as the regional economic development agency, to actively promote Park City as a location for business opportunities.

- Consider marketing the area on web sites, brochures, and other means of promoting Park City as a business location.

### Expand services to meet needs of growth

There was a concern expressed that several public services in the Park City area are not adequate to serve future residential, commercial, and industrial development. These include public utilities, as well as public services such as law enforcement, fire protection, and schools. It was noted that the community needs to anticipate future growth by identifying those services and expanding them.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Request County Attorney research legal authority to establish subdivision impact fees.

- Amend the County Subdivision Regulations to include subdivision review criteria

that all necessary on-site improvements and a proportionate share of off-site improvements required to serve subdivisions are constructed or guaranteed before a subdivision is platted.

- Update subdivision improvement agreement requirements in Subdivision Regulations to cover on site improvements and proportionate share payments or other means of assistance for off-site improvements.

- Require a per capita cost basis for minor subdivisions or a more detailed case study method for major subdivisions.

- Park City School District could discuss options for participation in tax base sharing under the Hard Rock Mining Impact Plan with the affected school districts identified in the impact plan.

- Participate in County Capital Improvement Planning for expanding and maintaining local facilities to serve future needs.

### Find options for the increased compatibility of land uses

It was noted that the potential for future development to impact the Park City community adversely would depend largely on its ability to complement adjoining land uses and blend in with the existing community. It was stated that new development should be required to accomplish this more effectively than past development has managed to do.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Review and evaluate options for citizen petitioned planning and zoning district or neighborhood planning with development regulations as alternative means of protecting existing property values in the Park City area.

- Amend the Subdivision Regulations to include design standards which requires the development of new subdivisions to be compatible with the type, size, and character of existing adjacent development.

### Study Groundwater Quality in the area

There were concerns that the groundwater resources of the Park City area are being impacted by recent development at increasing densities. It was noted that growth rate in the area was about twenty nine percent from 1990 to 2000.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Support a groundwater analysis in the Park City area to determine the extent to which groundwater quantity and quality in the area can sustain new development.

- Request the Beartooth R, C & D identify available funding sources to prepare feasibility studies, design and construct a public water system for Park City.

## 8.7 Rapelje Area Issues

The following issues were identified for the Rapelje area from survey results, community forum held at the Stockman Café in Rapelje during 2002 and written comments received.

### Improve access to town from Billings

It was noted that direct road access from Rapelje to Billings could be substantially improved, and this would increase the likelihood of people from Billings coming to Rapelje to visit or reside. It was noted that it was a shame that most of the railroad right-of-way was sold off when the tracks were pulled up, as this right-of-way would have provided more of a direct route for a Molt-Rapelje Highway rather than the dog-leg route now available via county roads.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Request the County Road Department investigate the feasibility of paving the Molt-Rapelje Road as an extension of State Highway 302 westward from Molt to Rapelje or reconstructing the county road to State Secondary Highway Standards including new right-of-way for portions of the route.

### Update services

It was noted that several local services and utilities may not be adequate for new development. These will need to be identified and improved as part of any economic development effort.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Utilize local community organizations with assistance from area economic development organizations to seek ways to encourage young families to relocate to Rapelje and increase the demand for local facilities and services.

- Request assistance from the Beartooth R, C & D to identify grant sources to help fund improvements to the Rapelje Water System and evaluate the feasibility of a public sewer system.

- Community leaders contact telecommunications companies to explore ways to improve electronic communication in the Rapelje area.

### Recreation events to bring in visitors

The Rapelje community has promoted several recreational events to bring visitors into the community. These include the Rapelje 100 Bike Race, several other bike events, the annual Prairie Dog Shoot, and an annual community festival with “prairie golf.” These

events bring business to the area and expose visitors to the community. By diversifying the activities available to the families of event participants, the Rapelje community hopes to increase attendance at the events.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Continue to promote the Rapelje community and surrounding area as a destination for Billings-area bicyclists through local community efforts. Brochure distributed through bicycle shops and clubs in the Billings area that target mountain bikes riders was one idea to promote the Rapelje area.

- Request permission from the County to establish a community park and campground on land originally platted for parks in Rapelje. This facility would serve the community as a central area and playground and also function as a camping site for out-of-town participants in future recreational events.

- Community organizations can investigate the feasibility of establishing a BMX-bike and skateboard park with assistance from the County Planning Office.

### Housing – bring in families to live

It was mentioned that the community of Rapelje needs more families in order to survive. Consequently, more housing opportunities are also needed.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Develop workable options for providing septic service to the existing, undersized lots in Rapelje. These may include combined drain fields that would serve multiple dwellings and even the possibility of a community septic system that would serve all or most of the community – including that portion which is platted but not developed.

- Request assistance from the Beartooth R, C & D to research ways to improve the community's water system, including a feasibility study, engineered design and construction funding through such sources as CDBG and Treasure State Endowment.

- Community organizations in cooperation with local real estate agents could develop a way to market existing platted lots in Rapelje by connecting interested buyers with lot owners.

## 8.8 Reed Point Area Issues

The following issues were identified for the Reed Point area from survey results, community forum held at the Reed Point Elementary School during 2002, and written comments received.

### Increase the town population to support schools, businesses

This issue is intended to encourage population growth and development in the Reed Point area to increase the profitability of local businesses, encourage the establishment of new businesses in the community, and increase the local school population.

Suggested action items include the following:

- Request assistance from Beartooth R, C & D to apply for grant funding to increase the capacity of the existing sewer treatment facility by constructing additional ponds. Grant funding may come from CDBG, Treasure State Endowment or other sources.

- Request grant funding for a feasibility study for a community domestic water system. This may be operated and maintained by the Reed Point Water & Sewer District. Funding may also come, in part, from CDBG or Treasure State Endowment.

- Community and County support for the Reed Point Fire Department to better serve the community's needs. This may include improved trucks, more equipment, training, and the completion of the enlarged fire hall. If possible, structural certification would be achieved but may require younger volunteers prepared to take on the training necessary for certification.

- Increase school capacity. The Reed Point Elementary School and Reed Point High School are both nearing their design capacity, and should anticipate future space needs based on projected community growth. Plans should be prepared to add new classrooms and events as community population increases.

**Promote economic development with recreation on the river and lodging on I-90.** This issue includes two basic ideas for promoting economic development in the Reed Point area.

Suggested action items include the following:

- County officials and community leaders open a dialogue with Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks to request improvement of the state recreation site at Indian Fort, north of Reed Point. These improvements should include the access road, boat ramp, campground area, and maintenance of the facility to encourage increased recreational use of the Yellowstone River and commercial activity in Reed Point.

- Encourage freeway-oriented commercial activity at the Reed Point off-ramp to attract interstate travelers into town. This may include the extension of utilities to this area and renovation or expansion of existing businesses.

## MAPS & INFORMATION for NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

The recommendation for neighborhood plans is intended to be more action oriented and specific to each area than the County Growth Policy. The following maps of population and housing by elementary school district display information from the 2000 Census that

can be utilized for neighborhood plans based on the school district boundaries. It is noted that total population and housing figures for Broadview, Absarokee and Reed Point districts may include portions of neighboring counties.

# APPENDIX A

## Stillwater County Growth Survey 2002

## Land Use Report

**1: Strongly Agree 6: Strongly Disagree**

| Community | Farms and Ranches are a good way to preserve open space | Land use planning should guide the location of new residential development | Loss of agricultural production is a problem | Stillwater County needs more jobs | Maintaining recreational access to public lands is important | Land use planning should determine the amount of development | Government regulation should be kept to a minimum | Subdivision of rural areas, including agricultural lands is a problem | Infringement on private property rights is a problem | Infrastructure (roads, water, etc) needs to be improved | Subdivision activity should be regulated |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non Specified 32 Surveys | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.7 | 2.7 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 1.8 | 1.8 | 1.3 |
| Absarokee 94 Surveys | 1.7 | 2.1 | 1.8 | 2.7 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 1.9 | 2.4 | 2.1 | 1.9 |
| Columbus 118 Surveys | 1.8 | 1.8 | 2.0 | 2.5 | 1.9 | 2.4 | 2.8 | 2.2 | 2.8 | 2.1 | 1.9 |
| Dean 6 Surveys | 1.5 | 3.0 | 1.5 | 3.3 | 2.8 | 2.2 | 2.0 | 1.3 | 1.8 | 2.8 | 1.8 |
| Fishtail 23 Surveys | 2.1 | 2.7 | 2.3 | 3.4 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.0 | 2.6 | 1.9 | 2.9 | 2.8 |
| Molt 8 Surveys | 1.5 | 1.5 | 1.8 | 2.8 | 3.1 | 1.9 | 2.8 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 3.0 | 1.9 |
| Nye 27 Surveys | 1.6 | 2.0 | 1.6 | 3.2 | 2.8 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 2.1 | 2.0 | 2.2 | 2.1 |
| Park City 69 Surveys | 2.0 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 2.5 | 1.9 | 2.3 | 2.5 | 2.3 | 2.5 | 2.4 | 1.8 |
| Rapelje 9 Surveys | 1.2 | 2.1 | 1.6 | 2.9 | 3.8 | 3.0 | 1.7 | 2.1 | 2.0 | 1.8 | 2.1 |
| Reed Point 15 Surveys | 1.8 | 1.9 | 2.1 | 1.6 | 1.5 | 2.8 | 2.6 | 2.4 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 2.1 |
| **Average** | **1.7** | **2.1** | **1.8** | **2.8** | **2.5** | **2.4** | **2.3** | **2.1** | **2.2** | **2.3** | **2.0** |

Data is based on the average of the number of surveys received from each community

# Land Use Report (cont)

**1: Strongly Agree 6: Strongly Disagree**

| Community | Stillwater County needs a growth policy | Population growth should be located in or near existing towns | Stillwater County should provide tax breaks to attract businesses to the area | People should be able to subdivide where they want | Subdivision of rural lands and agriculture can be regulated without infringing on private property rights | New developments should not increase existing property taxes | Services (police, fire protection, etc) need to be improved | Conservation Easements are a viable tool for protecting environment and preserving agriculture | Development should not be allowed in areas without adequate water supply | Development should not be allowed near the floodplain |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non Specified 32 Surveys | 1.4 | 1.4 | 2.9 | 4.5 | 2.9 | 1.2 | 3.0 | 1.7 | 1.3 | 1.8 |
| Absarokee 94 Surveys | 2.1 | 2.4 | 3.4 | 4.9 | 3.2 | 1.9 | 2.9 | 2.3 | 2.0 | 2.3 |
| Columbus 118 Surveys | 2.0 | 2.5 | 3.0 | 4.8 | 2.9 | 1.9 | 2.9 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.0 |
| Dean 6 Surveys | 1.3 | 1.8 | 3.2 | 4.3 | 4.0 | 1.8 | 3.5 | 2.3 | 1.8 | 2.0 |
| Fishtail 23 Surveys | 2.7 | 2.9 | 3.5 | 4.3 | 3.3 | 2.0 | 3.2 | 2.0 | 1.6 | 2.6 |
| Molt 8 Surveys | 1.8 | 2.8 | 4.1 | 5.6 | 2.8 | 1.6 | 3.6 | 1.5 | 2.4 | 1.6 |
| Nye 27 Surveys | 2.6 | 2.6 | 3.7 | 4.7 | 2.5 | 1.6 | 3.3 | 2.3 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| Park City 69 Surveys | 1.8 | 2.4 | 2.9 | 4.9 | 2.9 | 2.2 | 2.8 | 2.5 | 1.9 | 2.0 |
| Rapelje 9 Surveys | 2.6 | 2.7 | 4.2 | 5.0 | 3.9 | 1.1 | 3.1 | 4.4 | 2.1 | 1.9 |
| Reed Point 15 Surveys | 1.5 | 2.6 | 2.5 | 3.9 | 2.6 | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.4 | 2.1 | 1.5 |
| **Average** | **2.0** | **2.4** | **3.3** | **4.7** | **3.1** | **1.8** | **3.1** | **2.4** | **2.0** | **2.0** |

Data is based on the average of the number of surveys received from each community

# Planning Tools and Actions Report

**1: Very Acceptable** **6: Very Unacceptable**

| Community | Putting Standards on development but no restrictions on land use | Setting criteria that must be met in order to develop | Zoning only in areas where landowners petition for land use regulations | Regulations for specific sensitive lands (floodplain, steep slopes, wildlife habitat, hazard areas, etc.) | Development only within boundaries around towns | Require developer to pay for roads and other demands on county infrastructure that are directly related to development | Require developer to set aside land for schools and parks or pay fees | Require developer to demonstrate that there are adequate facilities to serve development |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non Specified 32 Surveys | 2.9 | 1.8 | 2.3 | 1.5 | 2.6 | 1.3 | 1.8 | 1.2 |
| Absarokee 94 Surveys | 3.5 | 2.0 | 3.1 | 2.3 | 3.2 | 1.9 | 1.8 | 1.5 |
| Columbus 118 Surveys | 3.6 | 1.7 | 2.6 | 1.9 | 3.2 | 1.6 | 2.0 | 1.3 |
| Dean 6 Surveys | 3.0 | 1.5 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 1.5 | 1.3 | 1.8 | 1.2 |
| Fishtail 23 Surveys | 3.1 | 2.7 | 3.3 | 2.8 | 3.2 | 2.1 | 2.3 | 1.9 |
| Molt 8 Surveys | 4.5 | 1.5 | 2.3 | 1.6 | 1.9 | 1.4 | 1.6 | 1.1 |
| Nye 27 Surveys | 2.5 | 2.1 | 3.4 | 2.8 | 3.2 | 1.6 | 1.8 | 1.3 |
| Park City 69 Surveys | 3.8 | 1.7 | 2.8 | 1.9 | 3.2 | 1.7 | 2.1 | 1.6 |
| Rapelje 9 Surveys | 3.9 | 1.0 | 2.3 | 1.8 | 1.6 | 1.1 | 1.3 | 2.0 |
| Reed Point 15 Surveys | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.6 | 3.5 | 2.1 | 2.3 | 2.1 |
| **Average** | **3.3** | **1.8** | **2.7** | **2.2** | **2.7** | **1.6** | **1.9** | **1.5** |

Data is based on the average of the number of surveys received from each community

# Services

**1: Completely Satisfied/Couldn't be Improved 6: Not at all Satisfied/In need of Improvement**

| Community | Law Enforcement | Fire Protection | Ambulance Emergency Medical Services | County Roads | County Bridges | Senior Citizen Center | Public Education | Solid Waste Collection | Weed Control |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non Specified 32 Surveys | 2.5 | 2.0 | 2.3 | 3.6 | 3.1 | 1.8 | 2.9 | 1.6 | 3.1 |
| Absarokee 94 Surveys | 3.4 | 2.1 | 2.0 | 3.8 | 3.3 | 2.0 | 3.2 | 2.5 | 3.1 |
| Columbus 118 Surveys | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 3.8 | 3.3 | 2.4 | 3.0 | 2.7 | 3.1 |
| Dean 6 Surveys | 2.8 | 1.3 | 1.7 | 3.2 | 2.5 | 2.0 | 2.3 | 2.0 | 2.8 |
| Fishtail 23 Surveys | 3.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 3.5 | 2.8 | 2.0 | 3.2 | 1.9 | 2.7 |
| Molt 8 Surveys | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.4 | 3.3 | 2.3 | 1.1 | 2.0 | 2.3 | 2.9 |
| Nye 27 Surveys | 3.4 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 4.8 | 4.1 | 1.9 | 3.0 | 2.3 | 3.2 |
| Park City 69 Surveys | 3.0 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 2.9 | 3.4 | 2.7 | 3.4 |
| Rapelje 9 Surveys | 4.3 | 3.0 | 3.6 | 4.8 | 3.0 | 2.2 | 2.7 | 4.3 | 4.2 |
| Reed Point 15 Surveys | 2.9 | 3.4 | 2.5 | 3.7 | 2.8 | 1.9 | 2.5 | 2.9 | 3.0 |
| **Average** | **3.0** | **2.4** | **2.4** | **3.8** | **3.0** | **2.0** | **2.8** | **2.5** | **3.1** |

Data is based on the average of the number of surveys received from each community

# Features

**1: Not at all Important 6: Extremely Important**

| | Open Space | Agriculture | Wildlife | Wilderness | Mountain | Rivers and Waterways | Affordable Housing | Knowing your neighbors | Rural Lifestyle | Sense of Community |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Non Specified 32 Surveys | 4.3 | 4.6 | 4.3 | 4.0 | 4.7 | 4.8 | 3.5 | 3.9 | 4.7 | 4.1 |
| Absarokee 94 Surveys | 5.3 | 5.3 | 5.0 | 4.6 | 5.4 | 5.5 | 4.6 | 4.5 | 5.1 | 4.9 |
| Columbus 118 Surveys | 5.2 | 4.9 | 5.2 | 4.7 | 5.3 | 5.4 | 4.3 | 4.2 | 4.9 | 4.6 |
| Dean 6 Surveys | 5.7 | 5.3 | 5.7 | 5.5 | 6.0 | 5.5 | 4.7 | 4.8 | 6.0 | 5.0 |
| Fishtail 23 Surveys | 5.0 | 4.7 | 4.3 | 4.7 | 4.8 | 4.9 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 4.9 | 4.3 |
| Molt 8 Surveys | 5.4 | 5.1 | 5.3 | 4.3 | 4.6 | 5.1 | 4.5 | 4.4 | 5.1 | 4.9 |
| Nye 27 Surveys | 4.9 | 4.8 | 4.7 | 4.5 | 5.3 | 5.1 | 3.5 | 3.8 | 5.1 | 4.3 |
| Park City 69 Surveys | 5.3 | 5.1 | 5.1 | 4.7 | 5.2 | 5.4 | 4.7 | 4.4 | 5.3 | 4.8 |
| Rapelje 9 Surveys | 5.8 | 6.0 | 5.1 | 4.7 | 5.3 | 5.9 | 4.4 | 5.3 | 6.0 | 4.4 |
| Reed Point 15 Surveys | 4.9 | 4.9 | 4.6 | 4.7 | 4.7 | 5.7 | 5.1 | 4.3 | 5.1 | 4.5 |
| **Average** | **5.2** | **5.1** | **5.0** | **4.6** | **5.1** | **5.3** | **4..4** | **4.4** | **5.2** | **4.6** |

Data is based on the average of the number of surveys received from each community

# General Information

**Scale for Stillwater County as a place to live: 1 being a poor quality of life 10 being a very good quality of life**

| **Community** | **Stillwater County as a place to live** | **Would you pay more taxes or higher fees for improved services?** | | **Should new development pay for itself and not increase taxes for existing residents?** | | **How long have you lived in Stillwater County** | **How old are you?** | **Are you Male or Female?** | | **Do you work inside or outside of Stillwater County?** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Yes** | **No** | **Yes** | **No** | | | **Male** | **Female** | **Inside** | **Outside** |
| No Community 32 Surveys | 5.7 | 13 | 11 | 24 | 0 | 24.3 | 49.6 | 14 | 16 | 21 | 4 |
| Absarokee 94 Surveys | 6.3 | 46 | 42 | 84 | 8 | 24.7 | 54.6 | 55 | 35 | 52 | 10 |
| Columbus 118 Surveys | 6.9 | 50 | 54 | 103 | 6 | 20.7 | 46.4 | 68 | 45 | 69 | 18 |
| Dean 6 Surveys | 5.5 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 22.8 | 40.7 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Fishtail 23 Surveys | 7.3 | 12 | 9 | 18 | 2 | 23 | 50.7 | 15 | 8 | 14 | 3 |
| Molt 8 Surveys | 7.3 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 0 | 32 | 63.4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Nye 27 Surveys | 6.4 | 10 | 16 | 25 | 2 | 21.1 | 58.6 | 15 | 11 | 19 | 0 |
| Park City 69 Surveys | 7.2 | 37 | 30 | 64 | 4 | 21 | 48.4 | 45 | 21 | 16 | 30 |
| Rapelje 9 Surveys | 6 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 0 | 40.7 | 58.3 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 2 |
| Reed Point 15 Surveys | 8.1 | 9 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 13.8 | 50.3 | 5 | 10 | 7 | 2 |
| **Average** | **6.67** | **50.3%** | **49.7%** | **93.1%** | **6.9%** | **24.4 years** | **52.1 years old** | **59.4%** | **40.5%** | **74.2%** | **25.8%** |

# Regulation Viewpoints

**Under what conditions would you be willing to accept some regulation of Land Use?**

| Community | Regulations to protect water quality | | Regulations to protect water quantity | | Regulations to promote economic development | | Regulations to maintain agricultural production | | Regulations to protect wildlife habitat | | Regulations to preserve open space | | Regulations affecting subdivision design | | Regulations affecting subdivision location | | No regulations | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Yes** | **%** | **Yes** | **%** | **Yes** | **%** | **Yes** | **%** | **Yes** | **%** | **Yes** | **%** | **Yes** | **%** | **Yes** | **%** | **Yes** | **%** |
| No Community 32 Surveys | 19 | 59% | 17 | 53% | 10 | 31% | 22 | 68% | 15 | 46% | 16 | 50% | 17 | 53% | 20 | 62% | 3 | 9% |
| Absarokee 94 Surveys | 71 | 75% | 62 | 65% | 38 | 40% | 55 | 58% | 53 | 56% | 60 | 63% | 59 | 62% | 58 | 61% | 13 | 13% |
| Columbus 118 Surveys | 94 | 79% | 84 | 71% | 53 | 44% | 75 | 63% | 80 | 67% | 78 | 66% | 80 | 67% | 84 | 71% | 5 | 4% |
| Dean 6 Surveys | 5 | 83% | 4 | 80% | 2 | 33% | 3 | 50% | 4 | 66% | 3 | 50% | 4 | 66% | 4 | 66% | 2 | 33% |
| Fishtail 23 Surveys | 11 | 47% | 11 | 47% | 8 | 34% | 12 | 52% | 11 | 47% | 12 | 52% | 11 | 47% | 10 | 43% | 8 | 34% |
| Molt 8 Surveys | 7 | 87% | 6 | 75% | 3 | 37% | 7 | 87% | 5 | 62% | 7 | 87% | 3 | 37% | 3 | 37% | 0 | 0% |
| Nye 27 Surveys | 15 | 55% | 10 | 37% | 6 | 22% | 15 | 55% | 10 | 37% | 12 | 44% | 14 | 51% | 12 | 44% | 5 | 18% |
| Park City 69 Surveys | 52 | 75% | 48 | 69% | 36 | 52% | 49 | 71% | 43 | 62% | 49 | 71% | 50 | 72% | 50 | 72% | 9 | 13% |
| Rapelje 9 Surveys | 2 | 22% | 2 | 22% | 1 | 11% | 5 | 55% | 2 | 22% | 2 | 22% | 2 | 22% | 4 | 44% | 3 | 33% |
| Reed Point 15 Surveys | 8 | 53% | 8 | 53% | 5 | 33% | 6 | 40% | 4 | 26% | 6 | 40% | 9 | 60% | 10 | 66% | 2 | 13% |
| **Total 401 Surveys** | **284** | **70%** | **252** | **62%** | **162** | **40%** | **249** | **62%** | **227** | **56%** | **245** | **61%** | **249** | **62%** | **255** | **63%** | **50** | **12%** |

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