

# CONVERSE COUNTY WYOMING

## LAND USE PLAN



# RESOLUTION OF APPROVAL

## RESOLUTION 03-15 CONVERSE COUNTY, WYOMING

**WHEREAS**, the Converse County Board of County Commissioners have established the Converse County Planning and Zoning Commission pursuant to W. S. § 18-5-202(a); and

**WHEREAS**, the Converse County Planning and Zoning Commission has fully complied with its statutory authority pertaining to the preparation, amendment, and certification of a land use plan and the preparation and certification of its recommendations to effectuate the planning purposes of Converse County, Wyoming; and

**WHEREAS**, the county-wide land use plan incorporates the land use plans of the City of Douglas, the Town of Glenrock, the Town of Rolling Hills, and the Town of Lost Springs, pursuant to W.S. § 9-8-301(c); and

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Converse County Planning and Zoning Commission and by the Converse County Board of County Commissioners that the Land Use Plan within Converse County, Wyoming, outside the corporate limits of incorporated cities and towns, shall be provided for in this Resolution which shall be known as the Converse County Land Use Plan Resolution.

**PASSED AND APPROVED** this 7<sup>th</sup> day of April of 2015.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

  
Richard C. Grant, Jr., Chairman

**ATTEST:**

  
Lucile K. Taylor, County Clerk

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# **CONVERSE COUNTY LAND USE PLAN**

## **SECTION I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Converse County is a political subdivision of the State of Wyoming, having corporate powers as specified by statute (W.S. 18-2-101). The powers of the county are executed by a board of county commissioners which is charged with governing Converse County for the health, safety, welfare, and the best interests of all its citizens.

One goal of the County's citizens, and therefore its government, has been the continuation of a lifestyle which assures quiet enjoyment of private property rights and property interests and assures the highest degree of protection of these rights. Property rights and interests are important to the people who live and work in Converse County and many of these people are reliant on the land and its productive uses.

The Converse County Land Use Plan shall be used as a **guide** for all government entities, private property owners, and potential land developers in identifying preferred use areas in the county. **This Plan is not intended to, nor can it legally, restrict private property use.**

One objective of the Plan is to establish a process for Converse County to coordinate with federal and state agencies' proposals that may affect the management of public land, private property rights, and natural resources, so that Converse County citizens may preserve their customs, culture, and economic stability while protecting their environment. Federal and state managed lands make up approximately 24% of the total surface area of Converse County. However, over 60% of the subsurface minerals are federally managed. Thus, the County's economy is deeply affected and impacted by changes on federal and state managed lands.

Converse County is, therefore, legitimately interested, qualified per NEPA by special expertise, in full participation in the planning process utilized by appropriate agencies for determining and implementing land use plans and other actions in Converse County. This interest extends to land use plans or action formulation, development, and implementation (which includes monitoring and evaluation).

Local, state, and federal planning decisions may create benefits for a great many state and national citizens outside the county, but may transfer a disproportionate amount of the costs, impacts, and responsibilities to local communities and citizens. Through the land use planning process, Converse County commits to assuring that all natural resource planning decisions affecting the County shall be guided by the principles of maintaining and revitalizing various uses of federally managed and state managed lands. These planning decisions must consider impacts to Converse County's economy, custom, culture and historic use of government-managed and private property, and mitigate any negative impacts to the extent allowed by law. The County also commits to the assurance of private property rights, interests, and expectations; protection of the traditional economic structures which form the base for economic stability; and opening of new economic opportunities utilizing those natural resources within the County.

## **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

Through approval of this Plan, the Converse County Commissioners and their assigns agree to support the policies found herein. It is the intent of the Converse County Commissioners to protect the custom and culture of County citizens through a variety of actions. Federal and state laws require federal and state agencies to coordinate with local government and consider the local land use plans in the process of planning and managing state and federally managed lands within the geographic boundaries of Converse County, Wyoming. Therefore it is the policy of the Commissioners to invoke coordination with any and all appropriate agencies at the beginning of the scoping process and throughout the process for all areas of natural resource management and use.

Federal and state agencies proposing actions that will impact the County, its citizens, and resources therein should prepare and submit in writing, in a timely manner, report(s) on the purposes, objectives, and estimated impacts of such actions, including economic impacts, to the Converse County Board of Commissioners, 107 N 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Douglas, Wyoming, 82633, for review. The Commissioners will then determine appropriate action to be taken by the County, and provide information, input and comment on proposed actions or activities, anticipating the comments to be addressed and negative impacts mitigated to the fullest extent of the law.

The Commissioners will also notify other government agencies of actions that are proposed by the Commissioners affecting various resources and amenities in Converse County and solicit other agency input and comment. The purpose of this exchange of information and input is to minimize impact upon and maximize benefit to the residents of the County as well as other members of the public.

Recognizing the critical tie between use of federal and state managed lands and the economic stability of the County, the Commissioners will work to provide a voice for the individual citizens and local communities in guiding the future of the County.

## **PLAN ADMINISTRATION**

Amendments and modifications to this Plan shall follow the requirements of Wyoming State Statutes 18-5-202. The adopted Land Use Plan shall conform to Converse County Subdivisions Regulations.

The general guidelines are as follows:

1. Any person may petition the Planning and Zoning Commission to amend the Land Use Plan.
2. All petitions to amend the Land Use Plan shall be given to the Planning and Zoning Commission Secretary, at least ten (10) days prior to the regular Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, at which they request to present the petition. The Planning and Zoning Secretary shall then put the request on the next regular meeting agenda.

3. The Planning and Zoning Commission shall review the request to amend the Plan and set a public hearing date giving 30 days prior notice in the official local newspaper in accordance with procedures set for Public Notice by the County Commissioners.
4. Within 20 days after the public hearing is held, the Planning and Zoning Commission shall prepare their recommendation and certify its recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners.
5. Before adopting the recommendations, the Board of Converse County Commissioners shall hold a public hearing with at least 14 days notice published in the newspaper. After the public hearing has been held, the Board of County Commissioners shall vote upon the adoption of the Planning and Zoning Commission's recommendations. No Planning recommendation shall be adopted unless a majority of the Board votes in favor of the recommendation.

## **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

An underlying philosophy of the Converse County Land Use Planning process is that when people take part in the formulation of a Land Use Plan from the beginning, it can truly be said to be "their Plan". Not only will the Land Use Plan stand a better chance for adoption by the Board of County Commissioners, it will also have a real opportunity to be implemented. Through participation, citizens have an opportunity to guide their living environment.

### **Policy regarding citizen participation:**

- 1.1: Continue to provide citizens of Converse County with information and opportunities to participate in the land use planning process of Converse County.

Citizen participation in land use planning should be viewed as a real opportunity to influence decision-making. If the process has no impact on decisions, it will fail. Citizen participation can have several beneficial effects on both County government and the citizens. These can include more efficient use of public money; a more equitable distribution of resources; and a community feeling that residents and the County are cooperating to achieve a common purpose.

The objectives of any form of citizen participation are clear. The structure must be meaningful, accessible, comprehensive, and understandable. A meaningful structure must offer a real opportunity to influence public decisions. People must find the structure easy to become involved in and a convenient way of expressing their opinions. The citizen participation effort should not be constrained to any particular field of operation, but citizens should be encouraged to become involved in any and all matters of County concern. Lastly, any citizen participation process should not be overly complex or bureaucratic, but should be simple and straightforward.

The Converse County Board of Commissioners recognizes that this Plan is a work in continuous progress. It will require the cooperation, work, and dedication of many County residents. Additional policy alternatives, when developed, will be added to this Plan. The ongoing policy development will include consideration of all historic and cultural, as well as current land uses in Converse County.

# **Converse County Land Use Plan**

## **SECTION II**

## **BACKGROUND**

Converse County is located in the central eastern portion of Wyoming and contains over 2.7 million acres. The County is bounded on the north by Campbell County, on the northeast by Weston County, on the east by Niobrara County, on the southeast by Platte County, on the south by Albany County, on the southwest by Carbon County, on the west by Natrona County, and on the northwest by Johnson County. The southern part of the County contains portions of the Medicine Bow National Forest. The northeastern part of the County contains portions of the Thunder Basin National Grassland.

Converse County was created on March 9, 1888 by the legislature of the Wyoming Territory. It was formed from land ceded by Albany County and Laramie County. Converse County was named for Amasa R. Converse, a banker and rancher from Cheyenne, WY. Mr. Converse was a partner with Francis E. Warren in a large ranch in the eastern part of Converse County. On May 18, 1888, Douglas was voted as the County seat. In 1911, Niobrara County was created from the eastern portion of Converse County. The southern boundary of Converse County was slightly modified by special election in 1955 and land from Albany County was added.

The estimated population of Converse County was 14,008 in July, 2012, a 16% increase from the 2000 Census population of 12,083. Based on the 2010 Census population of 13,833 people, population density is 3.28 people per square mile. However, over 66% of the residents of Converse County live in established cities, towns, and communities: Douglas (6,120), Glenrock (2,576), Rolling Hills (440), Esterbrook (52), Orin (46), and Lost Springs (4).

## **CUSTOMS AND CULTURE**

The customs and culture of Converse County have historically been driven by open rangeland used for livestock and agricultural production. Rangeland used by livestock and agricultural producers continues to be the dominant land use in the County. Utilization and appreciation of wildlife have also been important components of the County's long-standing heritage and practice. Hunting, along with non-consumptive uses of wildlife, continues to be an important part of the County's culture. In more recent years, development of energy resources including coal, oil, gas, uranium, and wind have become increasingly dominant. In tax year 2013, over two-thirds of the County's taxable value was from energy resources.

Farming, ranching, energy development, and recreation provided the heritage of the County's residents, and such activities continue today. Early settlers of this land worked hard to establish their livelihood, and to maintain that livelihood, today's residents must work equally hard.

## **GENERAL LAND USE PLAN**

The predominant land use in Converse County is agriculture. The purpose of the General Land Use Plan is to indicate the other principal land uses in the County and ensure that rural developments minimize conflict with adjacent lands. It is also important that these developments have adequate provisions for health, safety, and welfare.

### **The Land Use Plan Policies are as follows:**

- 2.2: Encourage the preservation of our cultural heritage.
- 2.3: Minimize the threat from developments to the health, safety and welfare of those residing in rural areas.
- 2.4: Continue fire protection throughout the County.
- 2.5: Enforce the specific standards set by the County and State for subdivision development. These standards are available in the Converse County Clerk's Office.

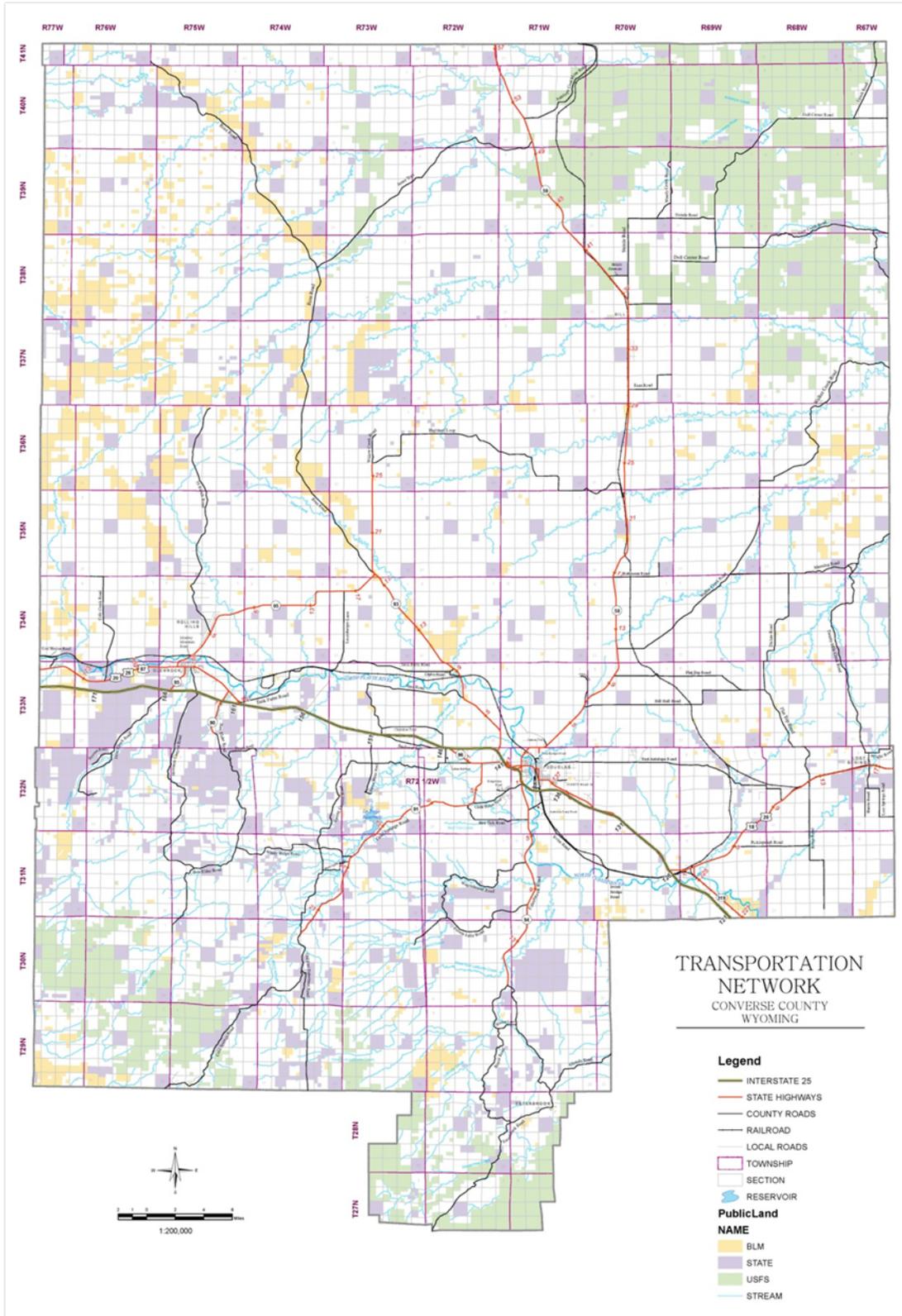
## DEFINITIONS FOR LAND USE CATEGORIES

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Defining Criteria</u>
Rural Residential	Residential development at a maximum of one dwelling per 4 acres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• land suitable for development</li> <li>• proximity to a developed community is somewhat limited</li> <li>• density limited because of lack of access to municipal sewer and water (1979 water study recommended minimum of 4 acres per well because of soil limitations prevailing in the county)</li> </ul>
Transitional Residential	Residential development at 12,000 sq ft per lot with city water and sewer. Maximum of 1 dwelling per 4 acres with wells and septic system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• access to city water and sewer</li> <li>• physically close to the city limits of incorporated communities within the county</li> <li>• suitable for possible annexation and/or incorporation</li> </ul>
Agricultural	Lands, which because of resource value, e.g. agriculture, non-traditional agriculture use, recreation, and extraction, are encouraged to remain undeveloped.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land not suitable for urban development because of slope, soil limitations, hydrologic, and geologic hazards</li> <li>• protect areas of important natural resource production and extraction, i.e. agriculture, forestry, recreation, and mineral extraction</li> <li>• development of agricultural activity with the usual associated uses should be encouraged within these areas</li> </ul>

**DEFINITIONS FOR LAND USE CATEGORIES (continued)**

<b><u>Categories</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>	<b><u>Criteria for Allocation</u></b>
Mountain Residential	Land used for mountain home or subdivision development and other associated more intense recreational activities (4 acre minimum, same as residential)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• located in the mountainous area of the county</li> </ul>
Commercial	General retail, service, and office intended to reach a community market and transient market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compatible with surrounding area</li> <li>• size consistent with projected space demand</li> <li>• convenient access available to the general public</li> </ul>
Industrial	Industrial activities, general manufacturing, processing, assembly, bulk handling of products, large storage requirements, heavy trucking, and may also involve activities which should be isolated due to hazards and nuisances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compatible with surrounding area</li> <li>• access to major transportation facilities</li> <li>• adequate buffering provided</li> <li>• nuisances and hazards minimized</li> </ul>

# General Map of Converse County



## **INCORPORATED TOWNS AND PERIPHERAL AREAS**

Historically, Converse County has been primarily agricultural. The increase and intensity of the development of energy related resources have created an influx of population that does not distribute itself evenly over the County. Energy development areas, such as oil and gas fields, coal mines, or uranium mines are dispersed throughout the County but the majority of the workers live in or near the incorporated towns.

Minerals underlie much of the agricultural lands and ownership of a majority of the surface agricultural land is in relatively large holdings. Individual parcels available for dwellings are minimal except in close proximity to the incorporated towns and/or cities where small parcels are available. It is desirable to have the workers associated with mineral development residing close to the major population centers because of the availability of municipal and county services, water, sewer, trash pickup, health care, educational facilities, entertainment, law enforcement, and shopping services.

Converse County recognizes that the incorporated cities and towns have their own planning and zoning regulations encompassing the region within their incorporated limits. Jurisdiction over these areas, regarding planning and zoning, is the sole responsibility of the communities and the residents that reside therein. The County Land Use Plan comprises all other areas within the boundaries of Converse County.

The County Land Use Plan attempts to logically extend the planning preferences of each community through utilization of similar land use designations at or near the incorporated limits boundary.

## **COOPERATION WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES**

An important element of this Plan is to identify policies related to the surface and subsurface management of the federal and state natural resources on lands in Converse County. These interests include, but are not limited to, farming, ranching, oil, wind, mining, recreation, wildlife, and all other activities related to, and reliant upon, the availability of natural resources. The economic challenge for Converse County in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is finding the right balance between using—and conserving—natural resources in a way that supports all the industries in this County, while preserving the historical quality of life.

All lands within Converse County are included in this Plan (or locally adopted Community Plans). Approximately 25% of the total land area in Converse County is government land of local, state or federal ownership. However, over 60% of the subsurface minerals are federally managed.

The economy of Converse County is becoming increasingly tied to the availability and management of natural resources. The availability and use of these resources impacts the ability of natural resource-based industries to pay wages and property taxes that support households and services throughout the County. At the same time, conservation of these resources, open spaces, and working landscapes also impacts the economy by attracting tourism, new residents, and entrepreneurs who value access to vast areas for outdoor pursuit and the quality of life associated with a clean environment and abundant wildlife.

When private land is acquired by federal and state agencies for any purposes, it is permanently removed from the tax base, adversely affecting funding for schools, healthcare, law enforcement, fire management and other essential services. The federal government has several mechanisms to reimburse local government for this and other losses of tax revenue. Payments to support local communities are currently derived from federal lands through the following mechanisms:

- 25% of Forest Reserve Fund (or elected current alternatives)
- Payments in lieu of taxes (PILT)
- Taylor Grazing Act Section 3 and Section 15

As Converse County works with other agencies to make decisions about the use of natural resources, both positive and negative impacts of resource development must be taken into account to ensure that the livelihood and quality of life for the County's 14,000+ residents are enhanced by a strong and stable economy. Changes in the availability and management of natural resources that swing too far in favor of either extraction or conservation of resources adversely affect the delicate balance of jobs, taxes, quality of life and population patterns that have sustained the County residents.

The Commissioners recognize that it is their duty and obligation to enter into official land use planning activities and to participate equitably and fully with the federal and state management agencies. In accordance with state and federal laws regarding land use planning and protection of private property interests, the Commissioners seek to maintain and revitalize multiple uses of state and federally managed lands. The Commissioners have developed a process to coordinate with the federal and state agencies regarding proposed actions which will impact lands in Converse County. This includes, but is not restricted to, addressing private property rights and private property interests, economic stability, the custom and culture of the County, and the provisions of this Plan. The Commissioners will consider interests of the people of Converse County regarding use of state and federally managed lands within Converse County's jurisdiction and are committed to a positive planning process with federal and state agencies.

**The policies with regards to Converse County's land use planning cooperation with other governmental agencies and natural resource-based industries:**

- 2.6: Support multiple uses on all federally managed lands in Converse County, emphasizing that no single use will be encouraged to the exclusion of the practical continuation of other uses.
- 2.7: Protect private property rights and interests.
- 2.8: Protect local custom and culture.
- 2.9: Encourage traditional economic pursuits in the County that form the base for economic stability.
- 2.10: Open up new economic opportunities through reliance on free markets.

- 2.11: Protect and enhance access for the enjoyment of federal and state managed lands in Converse County.
- 2.12: Discourage the creation of additional public lands.
- 2.13: Utilize government land for eminent domain use where logical, recognizing that government land has no greater value than private land.
- 2.14: Require federal or state agencies to coordinate with the Commissioners prior to taking official action, scoping a project, or issuing a report on a proposed action. The agencies may accomplish this in part by providing the Commissioners, in a timely manner, with the proposed purposes, objectives, and estimated economic impacts of such action.
- 2.15: Require all land management agencies to consider adjacent private lands, watersheds, ecosystems, and area management in planning on those areas of their jurisdiction. These agencies should consider the social, historical, and economic conditions, as well as customs and culture, of their management areas.
- 2.16: Request all governmental agencies to legally and logically respect the integrity of the Converse County Land Use Plan.
- 2.17: Provide information on state and federal planning decisions in addition to this Plan via written or oral comments or positions with the option to develop additional alternatives to be considered by the appropriate agency.
- 2.18: Proposed changes in state or federal land and resource management plans shall consider and clearly state the socio-economic impact at the community level, whenever possible. Any adverse impacts should be mitigated.

### **Coordination with Municipalities within Converse County**

Converse County Government will coordinate with the municipalities within the County, including the City of Douglas and Towns of Glenrock, Rolling Hills, and Lost Springs.

Converse County Government will work with the municipalities to review all properties adjacent to their jurisdictions that may require evaluation of extension of municipal services.

The County will take into account community input on development adjacent to all municipalities in the County.

## **AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION**

Agriculture in Converse County makes an important social and economic contribution to the economic base of the County and is important to long-term economic stability. Alfalfa and other hays, livestock, consumer meat production, pasture for grazing, as well as open spaces for viewing and hunting are very important products. In addition to traditional agriculture, specialty products (such as a local farmer's market) contribute socially and economically.

Many crops, particularly hay crops in Converse County, are enhanced by irrigation to improve productivity and irrigated crops are integral to production of livestock feed. Irrigation is derived from rivers, streams, dams and ditches, and wells. The North Platte River and associated creeks and streams provide key sources of irrigation water. The Medicine Bow National Forest Douglas Ranger District manages and controls the surface where the headwaters and watersheds of some of these streams originate. Dams are critical for holding early season runoff and for providing water late in the irrigation season.

### **Agriculture and Irrigation policies:**

- 2.19: Improve the economic climate for farming and ranching.
- 2.20: Promote the agricultural productivity of Converse County.
- 2.21: Maintain or improve water supply for irrigation and agriculture.

## **ANIMAL CONTROL**

Converse County contains many predatory animals. These predators range from large animals (such as the black bear, grey wolf, mountain lion, bobcat, lynx, coyote, fox, and possibly grizzly bear and wolverine) to smaller predators (such as the skunk, raccoon, martin, mink, and muskrat). There are other smaller animals (such as the prairie dog) that can damage agricultural lands and other properties. Some of these animals have federal protection under the Endangered Species Act, others are classified as trophy game animals with appropriate hunting seasons and limits, while others can be taken without need for a permit or license.

### **Animal control policies:**

- 2.22: Control predatory animals to reduce property damage and predation on large game species, domestic animals, and other private property.
- 2.23: Converse County shall coordinate with local, state, and national agencies to establish policies and practices for management of large predators and other large wild animals within the County for the purposes of ensuring public health and safety, protecting the tax base of the County, and providing for the health and production of livestock and wildlife populations.

## **ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES**

The area generally north of the North Platte River in Converse County contains a wealth of energy related minerals. In addition to the major energy producing mineral resources from coal, oil, gas, and uranium, there are also small deposits of non-fuel minerals. These include copper, chromium, iron, tungsten, asbestos, vermiculite and leonardite. Metallic minerals (e.g., gold, silver, beryl, zinc, lead and bismuth) are also found in the County but have not been produced in significant quantities.

While some of the minerals are owned by the surface owner, there are vast areas of separate ownership of the mineral and surface rights. A large portion of the minerals are federally owned, creating split estate concerns with private property owners. Every effort should be made to minimize the conflict created by this separate ownership.

Wind energy has been and continues to be developed, mostly in the western half of the County, due to the presence of electrical transmission lines, good wind resources and landowners that favor the concept.

Historically, coal has been one of the largest and most stable sources for County revenues, as production in Converse County has been generally steady for the past twenty years. Two major mines account for the coal production in Converse County: the Antelope mine, which is located primarily in Converse County, and the North Antelope/Rochelle mine (NARM) which has only a small portion of the mine in Converse County. The Powder River Basin, which includes the northern part of Converse County, is home to 13 mines, making it the most productive coal mining region in the United States.

More recently, oil and gas production is becoming a major source of tax revenue for the County. According to the Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, over 8.0 million barrels of oil were produced in Converse County in 2013. The Niobrara, Sussex, Turner and Parkman Formations are major producing horizons in the new shale development in Converse County with the Niobrara being the target for the majority of horizontal drilling permits issued in the County.

Wyoming Geological Survey information lists four major centers of oil and gas development in Converse County: Hornbuckle, Highland Loop Road, Spearhead Ranch, and East Converse areas. Well spacing in those areas ranges from 40 to 640 acres. Drilling can be vertical, directional, or horizontal. Well depths vary depending on the type of drilling, but most depths range from 5,500 to 17,000 feet. The production life of these wells is expected to average 30 years, with a few wells expected to produce for 40 years or more.

The current boom of oil and gas activity has created major challenges for housing and law enforcement services. The County also has to deal with health and safety issues from residents concerned about potential well blowouts, flared gas, hydraulic fracturing, toxic chemicals, higher rates of crime and drug and alcohol abuse in the community, and increasing road traffic. This increase in traffic has led to the deterioration of the roads in the County, with the roads in the northern two-thirds of the county being impacted the most. Existing roads, as well as new roads, are in constant need of gravel for maintenance and construction. To meet this need, numerous new gravel quarries and crushed rock facilities have been permitted, generally in the area south of the North Platte River. This has led to increased traffic and subsequent deterioration of the roads in the southern portion of the County as well.

Water is an essential component of oil and gas development during both the drilling and hydraulic fracturing processes. Drilling and completing a typical deep well require between 2.1 to 3.4 million gallons per well. This water comes primarily from either the North Platte River or water supply wells which are mostly located on rural properties.

Associated oil and gas processing facilities are also being constructed in the County. Railroad loading facilities, gas processing plants, compressor stations, solid waste and waste water facilities and a network of oil and gas pipelines have been or are being built to help export the quantity of oil and gas being produced within the County. The increase of mineral extraction and processing in rural areas will create an increased demand for road improvements and County services in these areas.

Wind energy installations have expanded greatly in recent years in Converse County. The County is currently home to three wind farms: Three Buttes, Top of the World, and Pacificorp.

Both positive and negative impacts of resource development must be taken into account to ensure that the livelihood and quality of life for the County's residents are enhanced through a strong and stable economy. Changes in the availability and management of natural resources that swing too far in favor of either extraction or conservation of resources adversely affect the delicate balance of jobs, taxes, quality of life and population patterns that have sustained the County residents.

**Policies related to energy and mineral resources:**

- 2.24: Minimize the conflict between mineral extraction and the historic surface use.
- 2.25: Discourage non-compatible increases in the intensity of the surface use in residential and commercial areas underlain by extractable minerals.
- 2.26: Obtain industry participation in upgrading the roads to handle the anticipated traffic where mineral development is increasing demands on County facilities. Improvements shall meet or exceed minimum design standards. (CRF Standards Manual)
- 2.27: Negotiate road use agreements so that the energy and mineral development companies share in the road maintenance costs of County roads.
- 2.28: Require that temporary workers' quarters meet minimum state and county health department requirements.
- 2.29: Require that trash and waste from energy mineral extraction and processing be handled to meet solid hazardous waste disposal requirements of federal, state, and county governments.
- 2.30: Require that industry provide funding to address infrastructure needs of its temporary and permanent employees prior to starting operations.

- 2.31: Balance both positive and negative impacts of resource development.
- 2.32: Encourage energy and mineral resource research, exploration and development.
- 2.33: Monitor water resources for industrial use in the County.
- 2.34: Manage watersheds for both water quality and quantity.
- 2.35: Proactively address needs for County services in areas of energy development within the County.

## **FEDERAL LANDS MANAGEMENT**

Currently, the US Forest Service manages 259,284 surface acres and the Bureau of Land Management manages 129,947 surface acres, or a total of approximately 14% of the County's 2.7 million acres.

Active federal lands management within Converse County must be based on sound science, appropriate economic data, local values and common sense. The Medicine Bow National Forest, the Thunder Basin National Grassland, and BLM lands have the capability under proactive management to achieve healthy ecosystems while providing clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and economic benefits and stability.

Forest management must include practices such as thinning, planting, fire management, noxious weed management, and harvesting of the forest vegetation. Timber harvest in the Medicine Bow National Forest is nearly nonexistent. Future timber harvest on federally managed land is encouraged. Vigorous thinning activities are encouraged on all surface ownerships to reduce the likelihood of catastrophic fires and the loss of valuable natural resources, structures and facilities.

Federal agency changes in grazing management practices must include coordination with the Commissioners on any measures implemented which would reduce grazing AUMs (such as prescribed burns or single species management). Federal agencies must cooperate with the Converse County Weed and Pest District for prairie dog management.

Permanent vehicular access to major watersheds is necessary to promote public health, safety and general welfare through economically and ecologically sustainable management of forest health and fire hazard buildup.

### **Policies regarding federal land management:**

- 2.36: Encourage active management of our forests and grasslands to ensure healthy and vibrant forests and grasslands for current and future generations.

- 2.37: Encourage future timber harvest, thinning, and fuel reduction projects on federal and state managed lands as a necessary means to reduce the potential for unnaturally intense wildfires and to restore vibrant and healthy ecosystems to these areas. One example already in action is the Converse County Firewise program. This program encompasses areas of Esterbrook, Cold Springs Road, Deer Creek and Boxelder.
- 2.38: Coordinate with the appropriate federal agencies in implementation of the National Fire Plan Strategy to strive to reduce fire-fuels to acceptable levels.
- 2.39: Coordinate with the appropriate federal agencies and ensure cooperation with the Converse County Weed and Pest District on prairie dog management.
- 2.40: Encourage federal agencies to refrain from decommissioning existing roads on federally managed lands unless there is demonstrated public support that the road is not needed for public recreation or for economically efficient management and fire management purposes.
- 2.41: The Board expects the federal land management agencies to follow and obey the same federally established air quality laws and regulations for the air above and exiting federally managed lands.
- 2.42: Discourage the Forest Service policy of “Let burn” during periods of high fire danger.
- 2.43: Encourage the Forest Service to manage national grasslands to minimize the number of acres of prescribed burns each year, particularly those areas which contain sagebrush. Planned prescribed burns must be coordinated with the County Commission during the planning process for each burn season. No prescribed burns are to be conducted during periods of high fire danger.

## **HISTORIC RESOURCES**

Because of Converse County’s location along the Platte River Valley, the historic route to the Pacific, local history is interesting and directly related to the settlement of the Western United States. The history of the area is in five periods:

1. Paleontological environments: Historic resources from this period include fossilized microscopic organisms, flora and fauna. The abundance of these fossil remains is not limited to any specific area in the County.
2. Prehistoric: Historic resources from this period include camp sites and kill sites scattered throughout the County.
3. Explorer and Trapper (early 1800's): Historic resources from this period are primarily limited to the routes or trails traveled by early trappers and explorers.

4. Emigrant and Indian War (mid 1800's): Historic resources from this period include the Emigrant Trails, the Army campsites of Fort Fetterman, and the Fort Fetterman Stage Routes and Stage Stations.
5. Settlement (late 1800's - early 1900's): This period marks the beginning of the economic history of the County. As the Oregon, California, Mormon, and Bozeman Trails pushed their way through the County, towns and way stations sprang up along the trails to provide supplies and services for the westward travelers. This period also covers the arrival of the railroad and development of early ranches and towns of the County.

In the late 1800's, the Elkhorn, Fremont, and Missouri Valley Railroad made its way across the County. The railroad provided two essential elements to the County's early economic development: transportation for livestock and need for fuel.

Railroads provided an efficient means of transporting cattle and sheep to eastern markets, thus making ranching a more viable business venture. With the railroads and the Homestead Statutes, the County soon became a thriving agricultural center. Agriculture continues to play an essential part in the economic diversity of the County. The majority of the County's land mass is still occupied by family owned and operated ranches. These ranches are comprised of both deeded and leased lands (state and federal grazing leases) to form an efficient operating unit. These integrated ranches have been an economic staple of the County for over 100 years.

The second element essential to the County's economic development was the necessity of coal, used by early railroads to fuel their locomotives. This need for coal was the beginning of the County's long history of mineral exploration and development. From these early coal mines to the oil and gas discoveries of the 1920's, 50's, and 60's, the uranium development in the 70's and 90's and the massive coal mines of today, mineral exploration on both public and private lands has played a paramount role in providing jobs and a healthy tax base.

The development and success of the County's economy has long depended on the hard work and the pioneering spirit of its citizens in cooperation with the local, state, and federal governmental entities.

The importance of the first period has global scientific and economic significance. While the second through fourth periods are of importance to United States and Wyoming history, the fifth period is primarily of local history and local concern. For the sake of future residents and travelers, local efforts should include a program of actively preserving and promoting those historical and archaeological sites of significance in order to develop research, educational, tourism, and commercial opportunities.

## **Inventory**

The following is a list of historical and archaeological sites in Converse County. Some have monuments to identify the site. Others are in various stages of restoration or deterioration. The most significant ones deserve some local attention.

Antelope Creek Station	WWII POW Camp
Astorian Route	Hog Ranch
Ayre's Natural Bridge	LaBonte Stage Stop Station
Big Muddy Oil Field	LaPrele Creek Station
Bozeman Trail	Little Box Elder Creek Monument
Bridger's Ferry	Magill Grave
Brown Springs	Oregon Trail
Brown Springs Station	Pioneer Cemetery
Buckshot or Cross Ranch	Rock in the Glen
Deer Creek Station	Sage Creek Fight Site
Dorr Place	Sage Creek Station
*Fort Fetterman	Sand Creek Station
*Glenrock Buffalo Jump	Unthank Grave

\*Denotes National Register of Historic Places.

### **Policy regarding historic resources:**

- 2.44: Continue to identify and preserve historically important sites in Converse County.

## **LIVESTOCK GRAZING**

Agriculture in various forms in Converse County is necessary to the livelihood and wellbeing of all its citizens and to the land. The County must strive to protect its ranching and farming cultural heritage and the vital natural resources needed to keep farms and ranches in business. When mineral resources have been removed (assuming proper reclamation), grazing will remain as an economic activity.

The US Forest Service (which manages the Medicine Bow National Forest and Thunder Basin National Grassland), BLM, and the State of Wyoming have lands contiguous to and intermingled with private lands of various ownerships in Converse County. Historically, grazing permits have been issued to ranchers to allow them to utilize federal and state managed lands. The US Forest Service permitted a total of 41,398 AUMs (1 animal unit month equals the amount of forage necessary to sustain one cow for one month) on 259,284 acres in Converse County in 2013. Of this total, 35,910 AUMs are on 173,375 acres of the Thunder Basin National Grassland in northern Converse County. The remaining 5,488 AUMs are on 76,330 acres of the Medicine Bow National Forest in the southern part of the county. The BLM permitted 25,244 AUMs on 129,947 acres in Converse County for 2013.

### **Policies regarding livestock grazing:**

- 2.45: Retain the use of federal and state managed lands for livestock grazing.
- 2.46: Develop and utilize programs to enhance the effectiveness of local government in the federal and state land planning process for grazing.
- 2.47: Encourage mechanisms to allow subleasing and the transfer of grazing rights or allotments on federal and state managed lands to preserve and enhance the local grazing industry and the tax base of the County.

### **NORTH PLATTE FISHING**

Fishing along the North Platte River and its tributaries has been a traditional activity in Converse County, both for local residents and for visitors. Income for County residents is provided by activities such as selling supplies and equipment, providing lodging, and meals and other services. The North Platte River provides many recreational opportunities in addition to fishing, such as float trips, bird and wildlife viewing, etc. The State Fair Grounds are located next to the North Platte River and the river provides numerous hours of entertainment for groups enjoying activities at the fairgrounds.

The two major towns in Converse County, Douglas and Glenrock, depend on the North Platte River and its tributaries to provide water supply, educational opportunities through the schools and Conservation District, and recreational events which attract tourist dollars to the area. In addition, many local water rights are appropriated out of the North Platte River to supply irrigation water for agriculture.

### **Policies regarding the North Platte River and fishing:**

- 2.48: Coordinate with appropriate agencies to maintain and enhance the live waters of Converse County for agriculture, recreation and municipal uses.
- 2.49: Support programs which maintain healthy forests which help ensure productive and healthy watersheds.

### **RECREATION**

Converse County is unique in the recreational opportunities offered due to the diverse topography found across the county. From the plains to the north to the mountains in the south and with the Platte River bisecting the center, many opportunities abound for the outdoor enthusiast. Traditionally, many residents and visitors prefer to recreate, camp and picnic in developed recreation areas. However, as popularity in camping increases, dispersed camping on the national forest and grasslands is occurring.

Outdoor recreational opportunities are abundant in Converse County and, other than big game hunting, tend to be focused in state and federally managed lands. Activities such as camping, picnicking, hiking, boating, fishing, rafting, bird watching, photography, trail riding, auto and ATV use, hunting and fishing, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, and sight-seeing are all readily available in the County. Indeed, many residents of the County forego more financially lucrative opportunities elsewhere in order to enjoy forest or grassland related activities.

## **Inventory**

Many recreational sites are located throughout the County including:

- Ayre's Natural Bridge County Park (the only natural land bridge in the United States with flowing water underneath it)
- County Park (Boxelder Canyon)
- Converse County Airport
- Converse County Shooting Range
- Deer Creek Stage Station
- Douglas International Raceway - Drag Strip
- Esterbrook Recreation Area
- Glenrock Buffalo Jump
- Medicine Bow National Forest
- North Platte River
- Paleo Museum - Glenrock
- Rock in the Glen
- Thunder Basin National Grassland
- Wyoming State Fairgrounds - Wyoming State Fair
- Wyoming State Pioneer Museum
- WWII POW Camp

## **Policies regarding recreation:**

- 2.50: Continue to identify and promote recreational opportunities that do not conflict with adjacent property owners or create undue burden on the limited county resources to support them.
- 2.51: Establish, maintain and improve developed recreation areas on federal, state, and county managed lands.
- 2.52: Facilitate and encourage recreational opportunities at the county, state, and federal levels. Any proposed curtailment of these activities by federal or state agencies require timely, written notification to the County and details of socio-economic impacts. Adverse impacts should be mitigated.
- 2.53: Coordination efforts should rely heavily on National Visitor Use Monitoring data when developing forest and grassland plans, policies and projects.
- 2.54: Encourage wide dispersion of recreational activities in the forest and on the grasslands to avoid over-use and crowding.
- 2.55: Coordinate with federal and state agencies to ensure widely dispersed road access to federal and state managed lands during hunting seasons, since the presence of hunters is the mechanism by which wildlife populations (both prey and predator species) are most effectively managed.

- 2.56: Coordinate with federal and state agencies to discourage allocation of federally managed transportation networks for the exclusive use of any category of visitor. With few exceptions, all roads and trails should be designated for multiple purpose uses that are consistent with the attributes of the road or trail.
- 2.57: Continue support for the ban on cross-country travel by wheeled, motorized vehicles as implemented by the Forest Service 2011 Travel Management Rule (TMR). In addition, continue to support the provision of the TMR that requires the designation of an adequate and sustainable route system for travel that meets the current and projected needs of summer motorized visitors.
- 2.58: Encourage federal agencies to make a clear distinction between user *conflicts* and user *preferences* be made during the development of forest and grassland plans, policies, and projects. User *conflicts* typically involve issues of safety or misbehavior. User *preferences* typically involve intolerance for activities other than the individual's preferred experience. Recreational plans, projects or policies should be based on user conflicts and not on user preferences. Enabling user preferences as part of forest or grassland policies and practices simply empowers more intolerance and more extreme behaviors.

## **REFUGES AND WETLAND AREAS**

Any activities that remove private land acreage from the County tax rolls, such as the creation of federal refuges, reduce revenues from private land sources. Federally managed lands are subject to the Weeks Act which provides for Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) to annually reimburse the affected counties for loss of revenue.

### **Policy regarding refuges and wetland areas:**

2.59: Coordinate with federal agencies in the designation and management plans of proposed wildlife refuges and wetland protection areas in Converse County.

## **SOIL CONSERVATION**

In the interest of soil conservation, both private landowners and developers of any land in Converse County should make every effort to conserve the natural resources at all times. Landowners and developers are encouraged to utilize the resources of the Converse County Conservation District. This is especially important during excavations and other disturbances, such as trenching, ditching, and pipeline laying operations that extend below the topsoil strata, but also includes activities such as exploratory development and water wells.

### **Policy regarding soil conservation:**

- 2.60: Coordination between landowners and developers/contractors during these disturbances is required to ensure proper soil conservation measures are followed.

## **THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES**

Due to the increasing number of species of concern at both the federal and state level, and the presence of potential threatened or endangered listing for widespread species such as the sage-grouse, the County encourages proactive efforts that might prevent a listing decision. If these efforts are unsuccessful, coordination with the County on the impacts of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) actions is required by the laws and regulations of the ESA and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

### **Policies regarding threatened and endangered species are:**

- 2.61: Encourage efforts by private, state, and federal entities that proactively implement conservation measures through Candidate Conservation Agreements with Assurances, Candidate Conservation Agreements, or similar methods in an effort to help avoid an ESA listing decision.
- 2.62: Encourage conservation easements to be held by private entities.
- 2.63: Coordinate with federal agencies in the proposed designation, delisting, introduction, reintroduction, and management of any species designated in any category or classification for protection, or consideration of protection, under the Endangered Species Act or similar designations.
- 2.64: Unless appropriate protections are in place, oppose the introduction of endangered or exotic species on all lands within the boundaries of Converse County.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

There is an extensive system of petroleum-related pipelines and a limited number of power transmission lines, telephone, and fiber optic lines in the County. The presence of these systems adjacent to property does not guarantee their availability. Anyone anticipating development in these areas should proceed with caution and contact the utility company owning the line or the "Call Before You Dig" phone number for further information concerning safety requirements.

There are two railroads that serve Converse County; the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad and the Union Pacific Railroad.

### **Policies regarding transportation:**

- 2.65: Ensure that rail crossings meet or exceed the minimum safety requirements (as adopted by the Wyoming State Highway Department and/or Converse County) to provide for any increased activity at rail crossings.
- 2.66: Encourage upgrading of existing rail crossings to meet or exceed the minimum safety requirements.

- 2.67: Withhold approval of new rail crossings on County roads until they meet or exceed the minimum safety requirements.
- 2.68: Discourage increase in development on, under, or adjacent to transportation systems that pose a threat to life or property.
- 2.69: Ensure that any activity on or near an existing transportation system meets the safety requirements of the utility.
- 2.70: Require that those transportation systems that have deteriorated due to neglect or other causes be either upgraded or abandoned to minimize the threat to adjacent life or property.
- 2.71: Ensure that those transportation systems being developed have, as one of their primary goals, the protection of the adjacent property owner's life and property.
- 2.72: Require that transmission lines be routed around potentially irrigatable agricultural lands and be adjacent to existing access routes.

## **ROADS**

### **Existing Conditions**

There is an extensive network of roads in Converse County. The primary through-routes are either State or Federal highways. Major highways through Converse County include Interstate 25, US Highways 18, 20, 26, 87, and Wyoming Highway 59. The County road network of over 632 miles is another essential system of roads. For the most part, these roads are not paved and are accommodated on either a 60 or 66 feet road easement. The easements, for the most part, are not surveyed or dedicated. Some of the roads are not built to any design standards for either weight or safety. The County Commissioners have been requiring the dedication of County roads in conjunction with approval of subdivision plans.

In addition, an adequate transportation system of roads and trails on federal and state managed lands is critical to the environmental, social and economic welfare of Converse County and its citizens. This system of roads and trails provides access to federal and state managed lands for purposes of farming, ranching, energy development and production, recreational activities, restoration/reclamation projects, fire suppression and management, management of weed and pest infestations, and emergency services.

### **Trends**

Rural residential development has been increasing which will increase service demands on the Road and Bridge Department. This may lead to a demand for paving, where gravel roads were suitable in the past. Likewise, there is an increase in mineral extraction and mineral processing in the rural areas, which demand road improvements due to increased traffic. With the expansion of job opportunities, there is an increased demand in the rural areas for recreation opportunities which will also require road improvements.

## **Implementation**

Continued analysis of rural road usage should be performed. The analysis should be used to set a list of priorities for roads and road related projects; i.e. drainage, structures, sight distance, etc. Each year those projects that are needed, and on the priority list, should be budgeted for.

## **Design**

County road design guidelines are referenced in the “CRF” County Road Fund Standards Manual.

## **Policies regarding roads:**

- 2.73: Coordinate with state and federal agencies to prioritize the establishment and maintenance of an adequate and sustainable transportation system on federal and state managed lands.
- 2.74: Support only those proposals for increased activities on federal and state managed lands that have adequate access on dedicated public roads.
- 2.75: Encourage adequate funding of maintenance for inventoried roads and trails.
- 2.76: Promote the control of noxious weeds on state and federally managed lands, easements and rights of way.
- 2.77: Promote a comprehensive inventory of all existing and historic Forest Service and BLM system and non-system roads/trails, and rights-of-way in Converse County.
- 2.78: Share access to databases and GIS systems among the government agencies. Note: GIS/GPS systems often do not depict the legal access to an oil/gas production facility and should not be relied upon for this purpose.
- 2.79: Ensure a County road system that is safe, and requires a minimum of maintenance to serve those activities and developments in rural areas.
- 2.80: Continue to improve Converse County’s transportation network for the rural areas.
- 2.81: Adopt design standards for County roads and engineering that incorporate safety and load considerations.
- 2.82: Require that those activities and/or developments that increase demand on County roads assist in upgrading and improving existing County roads, i.e. rights-of-way acquisition and construction assistance in the form of funds or actual construction.

- 2.83: Implement a long-range capital improvement program for the County road system.
- 2.84: Do not approve those developments that do not have direct access to public roads built to standards to accommodate the increase in traffic.
- 2.85: Designate those routes with aesthetic qualities or scenic routes and develop a Scenic Routes Plan to maintain those aesthetic qualities.
- 2.86: Ensure that all new rural developments that are accessed across railroads bring said crossings up to, or exceed, minimum safety requirements.

### **Roads and Trails Rights of Way**

Historical uses of federal and state managed lands have established official and unofficial rights of access to those lands, as well as to private lands. For rights of way that existed prior to 1976, the relevant federal law is Revised Statute 2477 which states in its entirety “And be it further enacted, that the right of way for the construction of highways over public lands, not reserved for public uses, is hereby granted.”. RS 2477 was enacted in 1866 and remained in effect until being repealed in 1976 by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). FLPMA protected valid rights of way established pre-1976 under RS 2477.

### **Policies regarding roads and trails rights of way:**

- 2.87: Adopt RS 2477 as Converse County policy. No closures or other restrictions may be placed on any travel way that qualifies under the provisions of RS 2477, without meaningful coordination among the County, federal, and state agencies.
- 2.88: Preserve historical rights of way on federal and state managed lands and enforce them when it is deemed necessary to do so.
- 2.89: Maintain and preserve rights of way going to and inside federal and state managed lands for cultural, economic, social, recreational, hunting, fishing, and public safety purposes, including access for suppression of wildfires and safety of fire fighters.
- 2.90: Access to and/or across federal, state or county managed lands within the County should not entail encumbrances or restrictions on private property.
- 2.91: Keep as many roads and trails available yearlong for economic, management and recreational uses as practically possible. However, it is recognized that some roads and trails may necessarily be closed or seasonally restricted for resource and wildlife management purposes. These closures and restrictions should be thoroughly and meaningfully coordinated among the Board, federal, and state agencies.

## **Road Decommissioning**

In many cases, roads and trails in federal or state managed lands have been decommissioned without adequate consideration of the potential economic and social impacts of those actions. Roads which are candidates for long-term storage or decommissioning must be evaluated for their future possible uses, as well as their recreational potential through meaningful coordination between the Board, federal, and state agencies.

When it is mutually determined through the coordination process that a road is suitable for decommissioning, treatment of that road should involve culvert removal, restoration of drainage to a more natural condition, remediation of washouts and slumps, weed treatments, and/or reseeded and reforested. All reasonable effort should be made to preserve reestablished vegetation on the roadway and on the cut and fill side of the roadway during treatment.

### **Policy regarding road decommissioning:**

- 2.92: Place roads that may appear to have no immediate use in long-term storage rather than decommissioning them.

## **Road and Trail Maintenance**

Adequately maintained roads and trails have less impact on resources such as water quality, than roads and trails which are allowed to fall into disrepair. Over the past two decades, federal agency budgets for road and trail maintenance have dropped dramatically. Roads and trails which lie within riparian zones need special attention since erosional sediment from roadways and trail ways is more likely to be deposited in the streams and ponds.

### **Policy regarding road and trail maintenance:**

- 2.93: Give priority to the adequate maintenance of roads and trails on county, federal and state managed lands. Discourage the diversion of maintenance funds to other activities such as road or trail obliteration.

## **Public Access**

Where there are federal and state managed lands with or without adequate public access, problems relating to trespass arise. Proposals to increase the degree of use on any such lands by the responsible governmental agency shall include mitigation of the trespass problem with the adjoining private property landowners.

### **Policy regarding public access:**

- 2.94: To minimize the conflicts associated with government lands, any proposed increases in the degree of use on government land shall be discouraged by local governments unless local communities receive benefits offsetting the additional burden on the infrastructure. Converse County supports land use exchanges and sales to make more logical and marketable, manageable blocks.

## **WATER AND HYDROLOGY**

Water resources are fundamental to the economic future and the quality of life in Converse County. Surface water has been and continues to be a critical water source for agriculture, towns, electrical generation, and recreation. Historically, ground water has been used for domestic, commercial, and agricultural purposes. For the foreseeable future, increased ground and surface water sources will be necessary to meet the demands of new and existing users including municipal, domestic, commercial, industrial, agricultural, fire suppression, and energy development and production. The quality of water resources needs to be protected while providing for increased use.

Converse County is approximately 60 miles wide and 84 miles long at its longest point. The North Platte River bisects the county across the lower third, flowing from west to east. From the flood plains along the river, the land slopes upwards on either side.

Topography to the north is predominately rolling, open plains with several areas of rugged pine ridges. The major drainage in the northern part of the County is the Cheyenne River and associated tributaries: Dry Fork Cheyenne, Antelope Creek, Lightning Creek, and Twenty Mile Creek and smaller tributaries. Most of the streams are ephemeral and run water during snow melt and after storms. Intermittent water flows, natural and/or man-made systems to store surface water, and/or to produce ground water are the water source. There are scattered artesian wells. This area is dependent on rain and snowfall, reservoir and well water, with average annual rainfall below 12”.

Topography in the southern portion of the County is dominated by Laramie Peak (10,276’), which is just south of the County line, and is part of the Laramie Range of the Rocky Mountains. The elevation rapidly descends from this mountain range to the foothills to the north, before the land slopes gently towards the river. Scattered throughout this terrain are several flowing streams that feed into the North Platte River. Annual stream run-off occurs primarily from snowmelt and precipitation in the headwater areas during the late spring and early summer. Low flows in the river occur naturally during the winter, with seasonal levels managed predominately by upriver dams.

Recharge to aquifers is greatest from March through June due to stream runoff from accumulated snow in the headwater areas augmented by the 12” of average rainfall. The headwater streams, which originate in the Medicine Bow National Forest, are functioning properly. At this time, none of the streams in Converse County have been designated “impaired”. However, catastrophic wildfires from the summer of 2012 have created multiple erosion problems, with some sediment reaching stream beds, which could potentially impact that designation in the future.

### **Policies regarding water and hydrology:**

- 2.95: Watersheds must be managed for water quality and quantity. Any proposal to modify water quantity and quality in a watershed affecting Converse County must be submitted to the County, in writing, in a timely manner. Socio-economic impacts shall be stated and County shall be given the opportunity to comment. Adverse impacts should be mitigated.

- 2.96: Identify and secure water sources for future uses within the County.
- 2.97: Water rights established historically and beneficially used by the citizens of Converse County, including, but not limited to, the purposes of agriculture (irrigation and stock water), domestic use, commercial use, and industrial uses are recognized as private property rights and are to be protected as such.
- 2.98: All management plans and land use practice modifications proposed by governing agencies premised on water quality and quantity issues shall be coordinated through local government and shall be consistent with the protection and preservation of private property rights.
- 2.99: Support amendments to federal policy to provide the option to use mechanized equipment for maintenance of dams and water delivery structures and for managing wildland fires on all federally managed lands regardless of use restrictions.
- 2.100: Receive notification and coordinate with all state, regional, interstate, and federal actions that have any impact on the water of the County at the initiation of the planning stage.

## **WILDLIFE**

Converse County is nationally recognized for several hunting activities, including the Helluva Hunt for handicapped shooters and the One Shot Bow Hunt. Numerous other outdoor enthusiasts are attracted to Converse County's hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities. The County is known for its big game hunting and provides good hunting for County and Wyoming residents and out of state visitors.

Hunting big game (including elk, deer, antelope, mountain lion and black bear), small game animals, predators, waterfowl, upland game birds, and trapping of fur bearing animals has been a traditional part of local history and culture, predating formation of the State. In early days, hunting and trapping of fur-bearing animals was necessary for survival. Today it is still essential for herd population control and continues to provide food and supplemental income for many people living and working in Converse County. Income for County residents is provided by activities such as employment for outfitters and guides, selling supplies and equipment, and providing lodging and meals and other goods and services to hunters, trappers and fishermen.

In some areas, increased population of wildlife and lack of suitable habitat on federally managed land is forcing wildlife to move onto private lands causing damage to private lands, and, is thus a negative impact on private property and a hazard to traffic on public roads.

The Board and the people of Converse County accept, support and wish to preserve the right to harvest wild fish and wild game.

**Policies regarding wildlife:**

- 2.101: Encourage improvements to wildlife habitat on federal and state managed lands in order to sustain viable and harvestable populations of big game and upland game species, as well as wetland-riparian area habitat for waterfowl, furbearers, and a diversity of other game and non-game species.
- 2.102: Coordinate with state and federal agencies to protect private property from damage caused by federally protected predators.
- 2.103: Receive notification and coordinate with all state, regional, interstate and federal actions that have any impact on wildlife hunting activities in Converse County at the initiation of the planning stage.

**CONVERSE COUNTY LAND USE PLAN REFERENCES**

Within the boundaries of Converse County are several incorporated communities with local governments as well as other elected boards. The Converse County Land Use Plan recognizes these governing bodies and their individual plans where applicable within their jurisdictional boundaries. These other plans are included as follows:

- Douglas Land Use Plan (by reference)
- Glenrock Land Use Plan (by reference)
- Rolling Hills Land Use Plan (when available)
- Lost Springs Land Use Plan (when available)
- Converse County Conservation District Long Range Plan (by reference)
- "CRF" - County Road Fund Standards Manual
- Converse County Subdivision Regulations
- Converse County Minimum Standards Governing Individual Sewage Disposal Systems
- Converse County Airport Influence Area

Economic and employment demographics for Converse County are available through the Converse Area New Development Organization (CANDO).