

## Suggested DRAFT OUTLINE for a “More Focused” Swan Valley (Land Use) Plan

### 1) Vision Statement

- a. Protect and enhance the quality rural lifestyle and the natural landscape amenities that we enjoy in the Swan Valley.

### 2) Statement of Purpose

- a. To provide guidelines and to **set expectations** for ALL GOVERNING BODIES as it relates to PRIVATE LAND USE in the Swan Valley.
- b. To emphasize the fact that there are clear distinctions between urban and rural community priorities, and there are corresponding differences in the **essential** governance processes that are required to “Sustain [Frontier Community](#) Livelihoods”.

### 3) Background & Planning Process

- a. The [Current Swan Valley Plan](#) was last updated and adopted in 1996.
- b. A [Community proposal to create an updated Plan](#) was launched in 2013.
  - i. Ten “[Community envisioning sessions](#)” were conducted.
  - ii. A workshop “[Planning for a Sustainable Valley Economy](#)” was conducted.
  - iii. A copy of the “Final Draft” [Swan Valley Regional Plan](#) can be reviewed here.
- c. Other related actions have subsequently emerged which help give shape to the plan:
  - i. The Commissioners adopted an [Updated Growth Policy for the County in 2016](#).
  - ii. An updated [Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#) is available for comment.
  - iii. An Updated (final) [Flathead National Forest Plan](#) has been released.
  - iv. The [FY2019 Federal Budget](#) provides new funding for Wildfire Suppression.

### 4) The [Jurisdictional Area](#) for the Swan Valley Regional Plan defined:

- a. The northern-most portion of Missoula County,
- b. Bordered on the south by the Flathead National Forest Boundary,
- c. Bordered on the north by the Lake County Line,
- d. Consisting of 237,699 acres, of which 24,639 acres are PRIVATE LAND.

### 5) Existing Community Characteristics

- a. Condon, MT 59826 is a [RUCA 10.1 Frontier Community](#). (RUCAs) are used to identify very remote areas, which could be considered frontier-like due to their isolation from population centers. Under the RUCA definition, types of rural and urban are defined by proximity to urban areas and the portion of the population that commute for work from place to place. For instance, a RUCA code of 10 is assigned to isolated, small rural census tracts. RUCAs are available by census tract and ZIP code area.
- b. Population - The primary [resident population](#), and school-age population, have been in sharp decline since the late 1990’s. The population growth anticipated in the 1996 Plan never materialized.
- c. Economic Conditions – The population trend reflects the current economic conditions. This [trend for rural communities](#) is well documented, and the Swan Valley Plan Area is no exception.

- d. Housing – Approximately two-thirds of existing homes in the Plan Area are secondary recreation homes used on a seasonal basis. Most new home construction is for second homes, with some planned for future retirement.
- e. Local Services
  - i. Telephone/DSL, Electric, Propane delivery, Solid Waste Pickup, Post Office
  - ii. Convenience-gas, groceries, maintenance supplies, FEDEX, UPS
  - iii. Elementary School K-8, Library, Community Hall, Churches, Non-profits,
- f. Public Facilities
  - i. Law Enforcement – MT Highway Patrol, Sheriff, USFS/FWP Law Enforcement
  - ii. Fire Service Area/Volunteer Fire/EMS
  - iii. [Transportation Network](#)
    - 1. State Hwy 83 jurisdiction                      road miles 16
    - 2. County jurisdiction                              road miles 33
      - i. Maintained                      road miles <33
    - 3. Private maintained                              road miles 61 approximate
    - 4. USFS roads OPEN                              road miles 105
      - i. CLOSED                              road miles 423
    - 5. Trails    trail miles 124
- g. Current Land Use – Private Land
  - i. Private property ownership in the Swan Valley has declined from approximately 48,500 acres of [“railroad and homestead-era”](#) land to 24,639 acres of private land today as a result of recent large-scale government land acquisitions.
  - ii. The [checkerboard land ownership pattern](#) of private and public land and the threat of habitat fragmentation have been significantly eliminated.
  - iii. [Voluntary conservation actions on private land](#) have restricted an additional 10,713 acres of private land from further development.
  - iv. Parcel density patterns, vacant land, and the [current housing profile](#) all suggest the community has the capacity for incremental population and housing growth without the need for significant community infrastructure planning.
- h. Current Land Use – Federal Land
  - i. In December, 2017, The Flathead National Forest announced the release of the final environmental impact statement (EIS) and draft record of decision for the [Flathead National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan](#). (1000+pages)
    - 1. **Purpose and Need for Action.** The purpose of the proposed action is to revise the 1986 forest plan for the Forest. The existing forest plan is more than 30 years old, dramatically exceeding the 10-15 year duration of plans directed by NFMA. Since the 1986 forest plan was completed, there have been changes in ecological, social, and economic conditions in the area, as well as changes in resource demands, availability of new scientific information, and promulgation of new policy, including the 2012 planning rule. These changes necessitate a plan revision to ensure

management direction is responsive to current issues and conditions. In particular, the plan revision addresses the following topics:

- i. • Increasing demand for recreation opportunities and their importance in supporting local economies;
  - ii. • Fire and fuels management direction that emphasizes active vegetation management near communities;
  - iii. • New analyses needed of timber production opportunities, an important historical driver for local economies;
  - iv. • Conservation of wildlife and aquatic habitat, including [updating grizzly bear habitat management direction](#) and Inland Native Fish direction; and
  - v. • New policy and public interest in identifying areas for recommended wilderness and wild and scenic rivers. To develop the proposed action to revise the forest plan, the management direction in the 1986 forest plan and its amendments was reviewed. The 2012 planning rule requirements also mandate that new management direction be developed to address sustainability. This section summarizes how needs for change identified in the 1986 forest plan and its amendments, specifically those related to areas of public concern, were addressed during the development of the forest plan.
- ii. In March, 2018, the adopted [Fiscal Year 2019 Federal Budget](#) Proposes a Comprehensive Solution to Wildfire Suppression Funding. (See Department of Agriculture). To resolve concerns about the sufficiency of land management and funding wildfire suppression, the Budget responsibly funds 100 percent of the rolling 10-year average cost for wildfire suppression in the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior within discretionary budget caps. Similar to how unanticipated funding needs for other natural disasters are addressed, the Budget proposes a separate fund that would include an annual cap adjustment appropriation for wildfire suppression operations in order to ensure that adequate resources are available to fight wildland fires, protect communities, and safeguard human life during the most severe wildland fire seasons. **In addition**, the Administration believes that meaningful forest management reforms to strengthen our ability to restore the Nation’s forests and improve their resilience to destructive wildfires should be a part of any permanent solution.

**6) Existing policies, regulations and other measures currently in place**

- a. [Missoula County Zoning Regulations](#) (195 pages)
- b. [Missoula County Subdivision Regulations](#) (192 pages)
- c. Exemptions
  - i. [Subdivision Review](#)
  - ii. [Building for Lease or Rent \(BFLR\)](#)
  - iii. [AG Buildings](#)
- d. [Permitting Process](#)
  - i. [Building Permit](#)
  - ii. [Electrical Permit](#)
  - iii. [Plumbing Permit](#)
  - iv. [Mechanical Permit](#)

**7) Projected Community Trends**

- a. Population-1% per year primary resident and housing growth; otherwise endangered.
- b. Housing-There will continue to be an ongoing need for workforce housing.
- c. Economic prosperity- deserves ongoing encouragement and attention.
- d. Land use-current parcel density and vacant land suggests adequate room to grow.
- e. Local Services –New Merc, Condon Community Church expansion offer new hopes.
- f. Public Services-ongoing need for volunteers, need for improved road services.
- g. Natural Resources- Public Land Management governed by FNF Plan & NEPA Process.
- h. Natural Resources-Private Land Management governed by BMPs.
- i. Frontier Community priorities continue to have little in common with urban priorities.
- j. Land Owners will continue to fight for private property rights and fewer regulations.

**8) Swan Valley Community Goals**

- a. Maintain the quality rural lifestyle and the integrity of ecosystem services.
- b. Restore Private Property Rights, personal and economic freedom.
  - i. Simplify the regulatory/governance processes for MT Frontier Communities.
- c. Insure the safety of people, pets, livestock, and private property.
- d. Make the Swan Valley Plan Area more attractive and more accommodating for home-based businesses, work-from-home professions, retirees, and recreation visitors, and to thereby **sustain** a more vibrant, community. If people want to work, live, and recreate here, then they can.

## 9) ACTIONS and measures needed to help achieve goals

- a. Restore Private Property Rights, Personal & Economic Freedoms
  1. **Simplify** the regulatory processes for Frontier Communities in MT
    - i. Lobby legislative groups to:
  2. Eliminate Parks, trails, bike lanes, open space mandates
  3. Eliminate [Wildlife mitigation mandates](#)
  4. Retain priority focus on health & safety regulations
  5. Retain family conveyance exemptions for homestead-era legacy families
  6. Develop criteria for path to ultimate subdivision for BFLR properties
- b. Insure continued access to public lands.
- c. Improve Public Safety via more proactive community processes.
  - i. Prioritize [fuel reduction projects in the WUI](#) via participation with FNF plans.
  - ii. Revisit living with wildlife from a people, pets, livestock safety point of view.
  - iii. Strengthen volunteerism, training, equipment for emergency services.
  - iv. Evaluate Reverse 911 for community alerts and/or community response drills.
- d. Support improved E-connectivity (electronic bandwidth) initiatives and opportunities:
  - i. Lifelong learning
  - ii. Emerging Telemedicine capabilities
  - iii. Work & Shop from home
  - iv. Etc.
- e. Investigate the formation of one or more Road Maintenance Service Areas.
  - i. Improve winter access, safety services, and maintenance cost for private roads.
- f. Encourage The Nature Conservancy to help craft a workforce housing solution.
  - i. Remainder of Section 31 has a higher and better use for the community benefit.
- g. Create a “tax-watch” information service to insure taxes paid reflect benefits received.
  - i. Opt-out of URBAN Parks, Recreation, Open land, Trails, etc. bond issues, OR,
  - ii. Failing that, propose ways that our Frontier Community receives benefits.

## 10) Implementation Process

- a. Reconcile (prioritize) [Swan Valley Plan Area GOALS, POLICIES, ACTIONS](#)
  - i. With the [ACTIONS OUTLINED IN THE County Growth Policy Document](#)
  - ii. With the [ACTIONS outlined in the CWPP](#)
  - iii. With the [ACTIONS and MONITORING outlined in the FNF Plan Update](#)
  - iv. With the [FY2019 Federal USDA Budget Provisions](#)
- b. Assign responsibilities to carry out (the suggested) ACTIONS outlined in (9) above
  - i. Community Council Assigns tasks to volunteer working groups.
  - ii. Working groups prepare Resolution Documents for Community Council Action.
  - iii. Community council reviews Resolutions with Agencies Having Jurisdiction (AHJ).
  - iv. Community council secures Memorandum of Understanding with AHJs.

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Respectfully Submitted  
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