

# Swan Valley Regional Plan Element comments

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**First I would like to thank the committee for all their hard work. It is difficult to write this type of document so that is useable, understandable and meaningful. It is hard to be critical when I know it was difficult to produce.**

**Goal:** Goals are general statements of desired outcomes of the community. While often broadly written, goals should be stated specifically enough so that it is possible to assess whether progress has been made in achieving them.

Not many of the goals are specific enough to assess progress because there are no baselines. .How do we “protect and enhance” water and air quality and measure the success.

**Policy:** A set of principles that guide an agency or organization. Policies are mostly (but not exclusively) directed toward Missoula County.

**Actions:** Specific items to be accomplished or programs to be developed and carried out. Action statements contained in the plan are directed toward both the County and the community as appropriate.

How do we “encourage”?

1. Introduction, pages 4 thru 6:

The people of the Swan Valley, Montana are committed to establishing, and maintaining control of their own destiny, respecting their daily customs and culture, while acknowledging their heritage and rural character. I don't understand what are daily customs and culture are??? ...driving to the PO to get your mail? Why not just say ...*The people of the Swan Valley*

*acknowledge their heritage and rural culture and want to remain in control of their own destiny.*

2. Natural Resources and Environment, (1.0 thru 1.15) pages 7 thru 17:

While most communities are defined by their built environment, the Upper Swan Valley is defined by its ~~natural environment and resources~~. Clear flowing streams, timbered mountainsides, and abundant wildlife ~~contribute to a wildness, rural character, and wilderness qualities that set the Upper Swan apart~~. During the visioning session and neighborhood meetings held during the early stages of this planning process, residents identified rural character and wilderness qualities as assets worth preserving even as the community grows and changes.

. Much of this area is valuable habitat for a number ~~of~~ of species.

Page 8 This particular forest community is used extensively by wildlife for foraging, and hiding cover in dense stands of Pacific yew ~~provide cover even during hunting season~~. ~~Not relevant it provides cover year round~~

Page 17 Goals, Policies and Actions

Goals should be stated specifically enough so that it is possible to assess whether progress has been made in achieving them.

How will we assess the progress of enhancing water quality and wildlife habitat?

. Who is Swan Valley Community? ~~Why not say encourage community members to participate~~ ... shall continue to advocate for public access to public lands.

~~Sometimes it seems that stuff comes out of thin air because they are never part of the previous discussion, i.e. public access to public lands. I didn't see it brought up as an issue and I don't see where it fits in this section about the natural environment, it belongs with recreation.~~

3. Economic Development, (2.0 thru 2.4) pages 18 thru 23:

A windshield survey revealed the following businesses **and organizations** that advertise along Highway 83 in the planning area: **the museum and fire dept are not businesses**

2.1 Swan Valley's location on Hwy 83, between the activity centers of Seeley Lake to the south and Big Fork to the north, **and with no east-west highway connections due to mountain ranges**, is a barrier (it is a valley, no need to say the east-west stuff. Disadvantage implies opinion, since some might consider it an advantage)

page 20 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph **That** the community will want...

page 21. **Accommodations:** (Providing lodging to support other activities such as resource based recreation and ecotourism) is essential. **Not good sentence structure - Accommodations are essential to support other activities such as resource based recreation and ecotourism.** (by saying accomodations now instead of lodging, which implies buildings to most people, the campground ideas are included)

~~Dining and shopping are available in nearby communities~~ **but would likely become more available with lodging.** I don't see that dining and shopping are going to increase since no one has thought to open the café.

Page 23 Actions

Establish a local citizens' committee to work cooperatively with the USFS and private land owners to improve recreational access to public lands. **Here is where this belongs but it still is not discussed anywhere beforehand. It is never brought up as an issue that needs improvement. Do you foresee people preventing access somewhere or is this about FS blocking roads? They don't have the \$ to keep up maintenance on all the roads. People can still walk to access public lands.**

Support and encourage the private development of modestly sized RV parks and campgrounds in order to broaden the accommodations base for visitors to the

Upper Swan. See previous note about accommodations vs. lodging. I am having trouble envisioning where in the valley an RV park or another campground would be located. It seems there is not enough use at the existing ones except for a few weekends. I would like to see data on the number of visitor days to justify that. Definitely located on the east side of the highway not near any creeks and so it is not on the river. I think there is enough dispersed camping available now as long as it isn't abused.

None of these actions appear apparent from the previous few pages – they just appear

4. Land use: (3.0 thru 3.12) pages 24 thru 31:

Page 24 This leaves about 10.6% of all land within the planning area ~~is~~ in private ownership.

Page 27 and such development should be visually softened through the use of ~~foundation plantings and indigenous specimen trees.~~ Who came up with indigenous specimen trees? How about native plants and trees? Are you talking about large ponderosa, Douglas-fir and Larch? If so, just say that.

Next paragraph – what are mature “specimen” trees

Sec 31

Sec. 31 is a 640-acre tract of land that was sold by the Plum Creek Timber Co. (PCT) to the Nature Conservancy as part of the Montana Legacy Project. The SW corner of this tract is located directly across Hwy 83 from the Condon Community Hall, Library, and the Swan Valley Centre. Because its location at the heart of the community, Sec. 31 is considered to be an ideal site for land uses and development that would be of benefit to the entire community. Only the SW quarter belongs to the TNC, the rest is already in FS ownership. Land ownership of this land would include a conservation easement by the TNC.

Page 29 the map should be redone so the legend does not include information not needed like ATV info (which is not explained), swan selection private (which

is not shown or covered by other descriptor

Page 30. Clustering – we don't want to create the same issue that Seeley Lake has with the septic system.

Access to Public Lands – Finally the discussion on public access. people can always walk, they don't all to be driving access. I am not sure where in the valley this is an issue that a private development will close off access to public land. I would like to see an example. If it is people wanting access to hunt, they have walk around any private land..

“behooves” really not a good choice of word

goals

what is a” logical and efficient relationship between residential and non-residential land uses” that is a very unclear goal. I have no idea what that means!

5. Housing: (4.0 thru 4.5) pages 32 thru 35:

It is a problem in all of rural Montana.

6. Transportation: (5.0 thru 5.6) pages 36 thru 38:

7: Public Facilities & Services: (6.0 thru 6.10) pages 39 thru 44:

8. Implementation: (7.0 thru 7.8) pages 45 thru 49:

page 48 “the actual impact of a single subdivision may be difficult to assess.

In any event, the Community Council should meet with the Board of County Commissioners in workshop session to discuss the action items and formulate a strategy to work together to see them accomplished. **Comment: I would hope the community council would be non-adversarial in a workshop of this type.**

## 9. Appendices A -D

### Appendix A-----Element 1 Natural Resources (1.3) Page 50 thru 51

1. Keep all structures at least 100 feet from any surface water body, including intermittent and ephemeral streams, and wetlands.
2. Keep paved and graveled surfaces as far from water bodies as possible, and do not direct run- off from these surfaces toward water bodies. 3. Leave a buffer of undisturbed natural vegetation around wetlands and ponds and along streams.
4. Do not remove vegetation from streams that is providing shade and/or stabilizing banks.
5. When streams must be crossed with roads or driveways (usually requiring a 310 permit from the local conservation district), use a fish friendly culvert and appropriate best management practices to restore and stabilize the stream bank and fill.

These are good guidelines and should be referred to as standards at the end of the element with the page #

### Appendix B----Element 1 Natural Resources (1.4 Bull Trout Habitat Conservation) page 50 thru 51.

Generally, the HCP calls for a buffer of unharvested timber 50 feet in width from mean high water of a stream. In some cases, a secondary buffer that allows some harvesting may be required. No roads may be constructed within the buffers (unless they are crossing the stream, in which case a 310 permit from the local conservation district is required), and no vegetation may be removed that is protecting the creek banks against erosion (and siltation) and/or maintaining shade over the water body to prevent warming.

These are good guidelines and should be referred to as standards at the end of

the element.

Appendix C—Element 1 Natural Resources (1.12 Ground Water Quality) Page

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Appendix D—Element 3 Land Use (3.5) page 52

Thank you for the opportunity to comment