

## Clearwater Valley Land Use Densities – Supporting Information

Last week's Pathfinder presented the results of the Draft Land Use Densities for the Clearwater Valley, as recently developed by the Seeley Lake Community Council. This Land Use map was presented to the community for public review and comment. This article describes the baseline information that was used to develop the land use density designations and how they were located in the Clearwater Valley.

The Clearwater Resource Council (CRC) began work on a landscape assessment in 2005. The CRC was assisted by the Ecosystem Management Research Institute which received partial funding from the Seeley Lake Community Foundation. The Assessment was designed to gather pertinent data on natural resources and infrastructure, to analyze these data, and present the results in a form that can be used for planning activities. Sources of information were numerous and include the following: 1. Base maps of topography, land ownership, platted lots, hydrology, wetlands, and roads are from the County, the State Natural Resource Information System, or the US Forest Service (USFS). 2. Maps with ecological information and the distribution of grizzly bears, lynx, bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and elk are from the State or USFS. 3. A map of power lines was contained in information compiled for the Seeley/Swan Fire Plan. 4. The Seeley/Swan Fire Plan also contained a map of the hazardous fuel areas within a delineated wildland urban interface and a map of forest habitat types. 5. Information on lynx distributions based on telemetry data was obtained from the USFS Experiment Station. 6. Information on grizzly bear movements was obtained from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. 7. Information on animal movement and travel zones across and along Highway 83 was obtained from the report on Animal-vehicle Collisions and Habitat Connectivity prepared by the Western Transportation Institute at Montana State University. 8. Information on forest conditions was obtained from USFS and MT Department of Natural Resources stand data as well as from satellite imagery of the Valley.

The Assessment combined this information through a weighting system to assess where multiple resources of concern occur. The Assessment does not make recommendations for planning, but provides a source of data to make informed decisions. The assessment is currently being updated, but a previous version can be viewed online at – [www.crcmt.org](http://www.crcmt.org) or a printed copy can be viewed at the Seeley Lake Chamber of Commerce or the Seeley Lake Library. In 2002, the Seeley Lake Community Council released the Seeley Lake Community Development Guide. This guide was developed by the Council to outline a vision for the future of the community, but was never officially adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. Land use densities were recommended in the Guide, but were not based on a detailed ecological assessment of the Valley and were made under the assumption that Plum Creek Timber Company lands would remain working forest lands. We now know that Plum Creek has plans to develop and/or sell much or all of their lands in the Clearwater Valley in the near future - likely within the next 10 years. For this reason, the County Commissioners have asked the Seeley Lake Community Council to update the 2002 Seeley Lake Community Development Guide with results from the CRC's landscape assessment, to consider the potential change in land use associated with changes to Plum Creek lands, as well as to include new input from the community. This planning process is designed to help manage growth so that the community continues to benefit from new opportunities and growth, but does so in a way that maintains the environment and lifestyle that make Seeley Lake the quality rural community that we desire.

If you would like to comment on the Clearwater Valley Land Use Densities, please send an email to [slcouncil@excite.com](mailto:slcouncil@excite.com) or send written comments to SLCC, PO Box 30, Seeley Lake, MT 59868.

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