

I. Introduction

Participating Jurisdictions

This multi-hazard mitigation plan covers the following local jurisdictions; the towns of Hulett and Pine Haven, the cities of Moorcroft and Sundance, and Crook County, Wyoming.

County Profile

According to the county land use plan (1998) Crook County describes itself as follows: “The people of Crook County historically, traditionally, and currently earn their livelihood from activities reliant upon the use of natural resources. The economy of the County has always been, and is today, dependent on activities critically and economically related to ranching and farming, logging, mining and other natural resource related activities. Segments of Crook County’s economy are reliant upon the abundant natural resources occurring countywide. In addition, family and community traditions have developed around the economic and recreational use of the land.”



Crook County is located in the northeastern corner of Wyoming. The county borders Campbell and Weston Counties in Wyoming, Carter County in Montana, and Butte and Lawrence Counties in South Dakota. According to the Census Bureau, the land area of the county is 2858.59 square miles (1,827,840 acres)—occupying approximately 3% of the land area of the state of Wyoming.

Demographics

The 2010 census counted 7,083 persons in Crook County. The population is distributed between and surrounding the incorporated communities as follows: Hulett 420; Moorcroft 3,270; Pine Haven 490, and Sundance 2,602. The percent population change from 2000 to 2010 was a plus 20.3%. In 2009, 22.8% of the population was under 18 years and 17.7% were 65 or older. (<http://quickfacts.census.gov>)

The population density of the county in 2010 was 2.5 people per square mile. Just over 97% of the population reported themselves as white. Other racial and ethnic groups represented by small numbers of

individuals included Hispanic (2.0%), Native American (.7%), Black (.2%), and Asian (.2%). Over 97% of the county population speaks English in their homes. (<http://quickfacts.census.gov>)

In 2009, there were 3,215 housing units in Crook County. The home ownership rate was 76.1% at that time. The median value of owner-occupied housing units from 2005-2009 was \$141,800, slightly less than the Wyoming statewide average of \$163,400 for the same period. Household size averaged 2.47. (<http://quickfacts.census.gov>)

Employment and Income

The most recent year for which data is available by NAICS (North American Industrial Code System) was 2009. According to this information, there were a total of 231 non-farm business establishments in the county employing 1,513 individuals. Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction generated the largest annual payroll of all sectors at \$8,951,000. This was followed in descending order by construction, health care, manufacturing, retail trade, finance and insurance. (<http://censtats.census.gov>)

The construction sector had the largest number of businesses (46), followed by retail trade (29), other services (22), accommodation and food services (20), health care (16), transportation and warehousing (16), and mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (13.) Most of the businesses are small, employing one to four people. Only two business establishments in the county employed between 100 and 249 people—one in manufacturing and one in healthcare. (<http://censtats.census.gov>)

According to the USDA Census of Agriculture, the value of agricultural products sold in the county in 2007 was \$49,983,000. The 2007 agricultural census is the most current information since the national agriculture census occurs once every five years. The products sold in Crook County in descending order of cash receipts included forage, cattle and calves, sheep and lambs, and wheat. (2007 Census of Agriculture, U.S.D.A. National Agriculture Statistics Service)

Per capita money income in 2009 dollars for the period 2005-2009 was \$23,634 for Crook County compared to \$26,925 for Wyoming as a whole. Median household income in the county in 2009 was \$50,581. The percent of persons below the poverty level in 2009 was 8.3%. (<http://censtats.census.gov>)

Geography

The county is drained by the Belle Fourche and Little Missouri Rivers fed by numerous tributaries. The highest elevations, just over 6600 feet are found in the Bear Lodge Mountain Range on the Blackhills National Forest, running northeast-southwest through the center of the county. The lowest elevations in the county, just over 3400 feet, are found in the northeast corner.

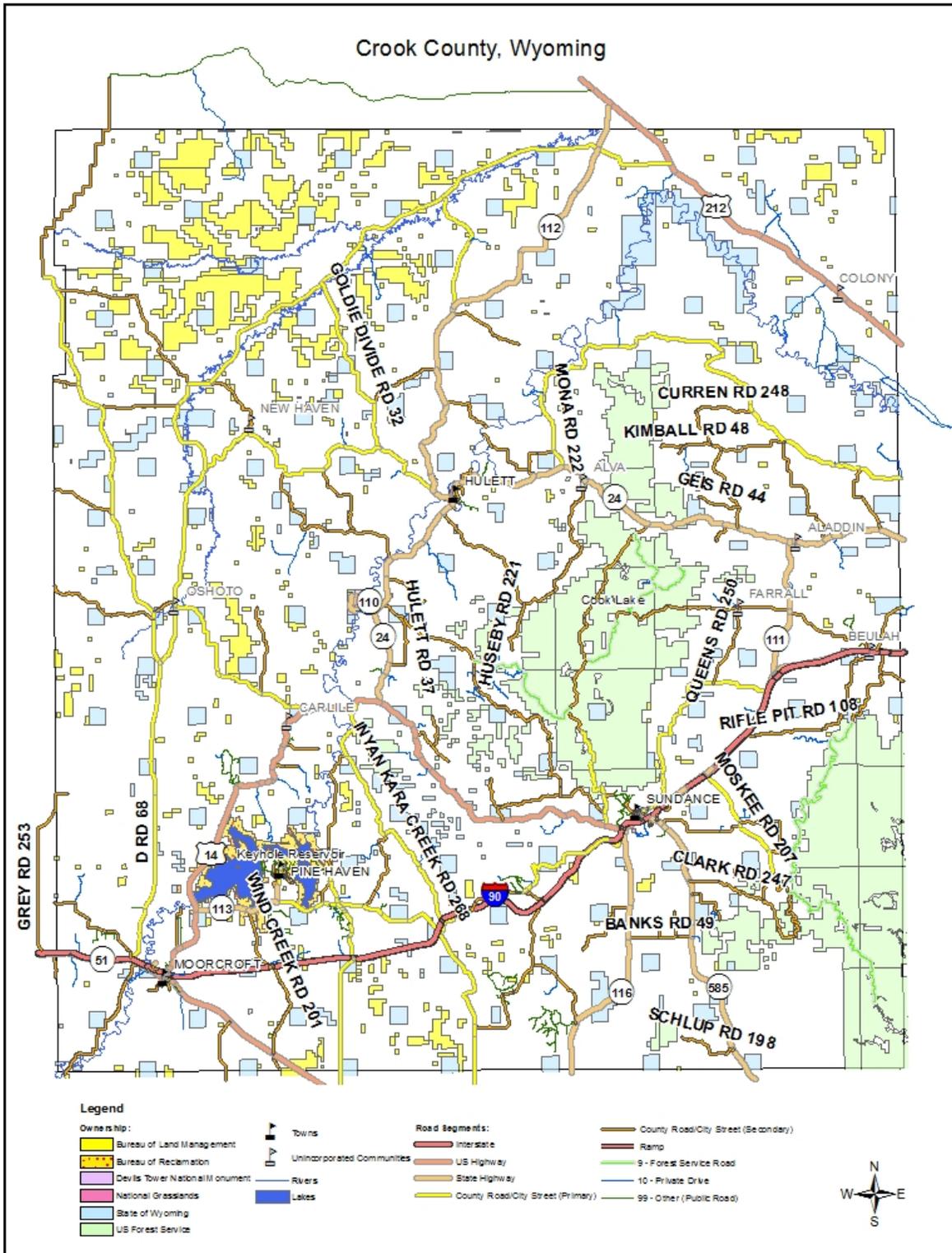


Figure 1.1 Map of Crook County

Land Use and Ownership

Land in Crook County is owned by private individuals and private corporations (79%), local governments, the state of Wyoming, and the federal government.

Table 1.1 Public Ownership Percentages

Entity	Percent
U.S. Forest Service	8.7
State of Wyoming	6.2
Bureau of Land Management	4.8%
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	0.9
National Park Service, Wyoming Game and Fish, cities and towns, county	<.1 each

Source: University of Wyoming Extension Service

Land uses include grazing and agriculture, mineral production, forest management, recreation and tourism, and wildlife. A large variety of minerals are present in the county. Some minerals have been commercially mined in the past, some are presently being mined, and there is ongoing exploration for additional types of mineral resources in the county. Please see the development trends section below.

The 15,000 plus-acre Keyhole State Park features a large reservoir, camping, and fishing. Keyhole is located northeast of Moorcroft. Devils Tower National Monument managed by the National Park Service is situated southwest of Hulett. The national monument, designated in 1906 encompasses 1400 acres.

The land ownership patterns consists of checkerboard lands (state-owned sections granted by the railroad to fund education), scattered tracts managed by the Bureau of Land Management found mostly in the southern and western areas of the county, National Forest occupying the higher elevations in the center and eastern areas of the county, and private lands.

Oil and gas activity occurs primarily along the western edge of the county. Grazing occurs county-wide on private and public lands, logging occurs primarily on the national forest. Recreation takes place on state, federal, and private lands across the county.

According to the most recent Census of Agriculture figures (2007), Crook County had 457 farms. The land in farms was 1,569,912 at that time with an average farm size of 3,435 acres. The land in farms was predominantly pasture (80.46%.) Cropland constituted 10.61% of the farmland, woodlands were 8.48%, and the remainder was in other uses. (2007 Census of Agriculture, U.S.D.A. National Agriculture Statistics Service)

Transportation

Interstate 90 traverses the county in a generally east-west direction across the southern and central portions of the county. State Highway 14 shares the I-90 corridor for a portion of its distance and deviates to complete a loop north of I-90 between Moorcroft and Sundance. U.S. 212 cuts diagonally across the northeast corner of the county connecting Broadus, MT, with Belle Fourche, S.D.

North-south state highways in the county include 111, 112, 116, and 585. State Highway 24 runs generally east-west across the northern half of the county.

The only rail line in Crook County is operated by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe and cuts across the southwest corner of the county for approximately 15 miles. The line runs south of I-90 through Moorcroft connecting the coal-producing areas of Gillette (to the west) with the Thunder Basin National Grasslands (to the south.)

The Federal Aviation Administration lists four airstrips in Crook County. The town of Hulett operates the only public airstrip--located two miles southeast of the town. This strip has a 5500 x 75-foot asphalt runway. Private strips are found four miles southwest of Hulett (Ipy Ranch), eight miles northeast of Moorcroft (Keyhole Ranch), and nine miles west of Sundance (Guy David Taylor.) The three private strips have dirt and turf runways.

Development Trends

The population of Crook County increased over 20% during the previous decennial census period (2000-2010.) There is no one factor that has obviously driven this increase. The economic downturn appears to have slowed movement into the county as evidenced by demand for real estate.

Development trends in Crook County are currently being driven by activities in the energy industry. Major energy related developments include the following (Crook County Growth and Development Administrator, Tim Lyons, and Crook County Emergency Manager, James Pridgeon, October 10, 2012):

- Strada Energy is prospecting uranium in the county. The Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality is expected to issue a permit soon. Licensing by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is expected by the end of 2013. The NRC is involved in this project due to the nature of the mineral. Mining would involve mixing the ore with water and then dehydrating the slurry to produce yellowcake. Mineral material would be transported by a combination of above-ground pipeline (from the mine to the processing facility potentially located at the unincorporated community of Upton) and via semi on the county's "D Road." Strada has already made a substantial investment in the project--obtaining mineral rights and ownership of the property. The estimated cost of the processing facility to be built in the county is \$180 million.
- Rare Earth Resources (RER) is now exploring on Bull Hill within the Black Hills National Forest north of Sundance. The mine plan has been submitted to the Forest Service. RER, a Canadian company has 2,400 acres of mining claims in the County. The prospective mine would produce a variety of rare mineral elements (neodymium, europium and others) used in computers, wind turbines, cellphones, electric cars, military hardware, and other electronics. RER CEO, Don Ranta, said in May 2011, "It's very likely we'll find a commercial deposit." The life of this mine is projected to be 20-25 years. The review conducted for mines on National Forest lands may be fast-tracked because the minerals involved are considered strategic natural resources by the U.S. government. Almost 100% of these rare minerals now come from China. The Department of Defense is taking a lead role in the permitting of this mine.
- Crook County currently has 352 active oil pipelines serving hundreds of producing wells. One Oak is constructing another pipeline in the east side of the county. This new pipeline will transport oil from the Sidney Montana area (Bakken Field) to the south. Transportation of oil products by semi on the "D Road" will also continue.

- Bentonite mining which occurs at three locations in the county (near Colony) is expected to continue.

Despite the potential for a significant number of new jobs in the county as a result of the above mining activities, county staff and elected officials do not anticipate a population influx. Many existing residents of the county are employed as miners—working at the coal mines in neighboring Campbell County. Rather than commuting given the choice, these miners would likely choose to work closer to home (Sundance and Moorcroft) taking employment in the new mines within the county. According to Growth and Development Administrator, Lyons, the county has land that has already been subdivided and is available for residential occupancy should the demand increase.

Crook County is also home to a significant recreation resource in Keyhole Reservoir. On busy summer days, Keyhole can attract from 3-10,000 additional people to the county. Keyhole is owned and operated by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and was constructed for irrigation purposes. Some residential properties in the areas around Keyhole are second homes. This recreation population is stable.

Lyons reported that real estate sales have been very slow since the economic downturn. What little market demand exists has been for 35+ acre tracts. This size tract offers space/privacy for builders and exceeds the threshold where subdivision review is required. One large property, owned by the Moskee Land Corporation in the southeast corner of the county, may eventually be subdivided for residential use if and when demand increases.

Commercial land development appears to be largely limited to the Hulett area at this time. The town of Hulett has purchased and annexed an approximately seven-acre parcel on the north side of town. They are now advertising these lots for commercial development.