

AREA PLAN

Revision

Panhandle Lakes Resource Conservation & Development Area Idaho

Prepared by:

Panhandle Lakes RC&D Council, Inc.



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Assisted by:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
and
Cooperating Local, State and Federal Agencies

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Introduction

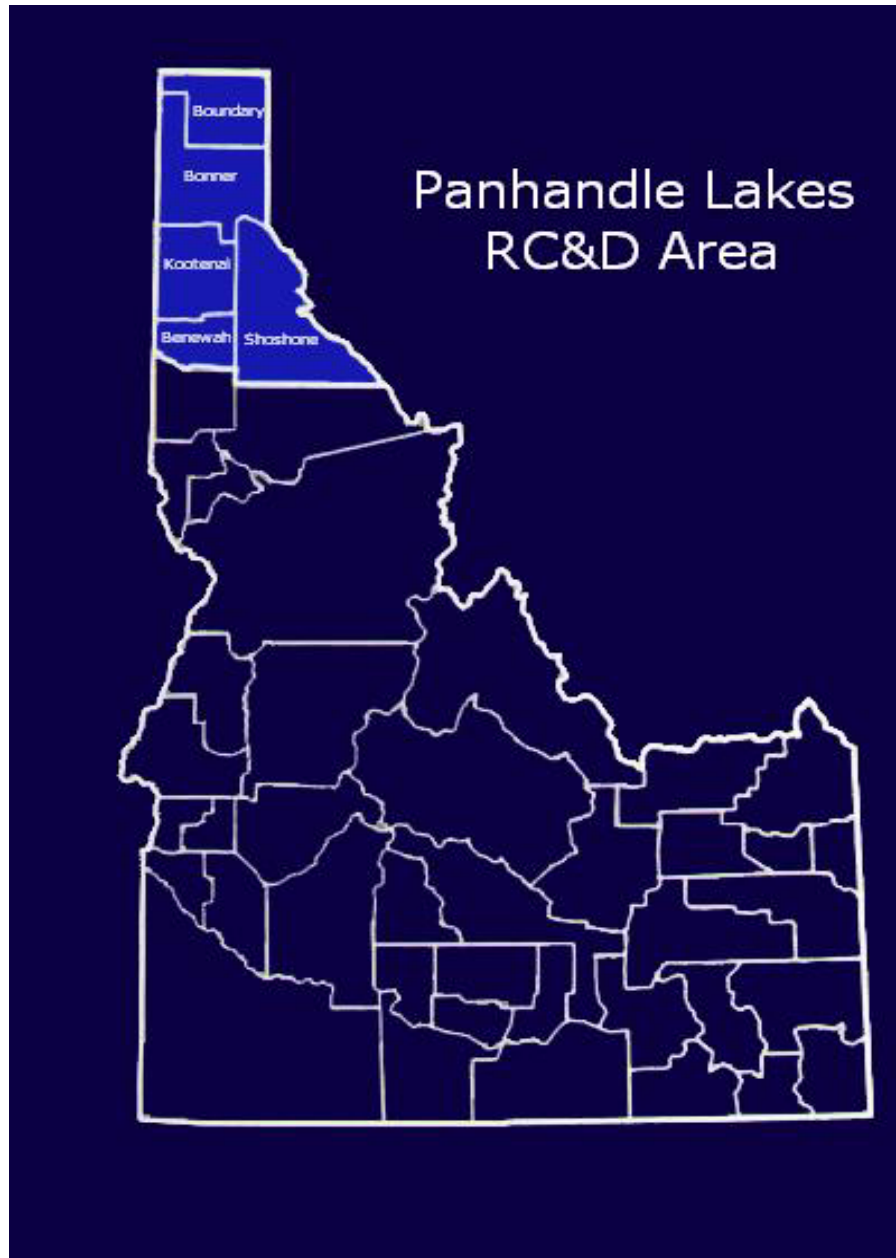
Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) is a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) program. The program is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Each multi-county RC&D program is initiated and directed at the local level by a “Council” consisting of sponsors.

As a 501(c) 3 organization, the Council’s purpose is to help residents enhance the quality of life in north Idaho by maintaining and improving the economic, social and environmental conditions within this region. Local people are best able to identify opportunities and needs in their area. The RC&D program helps by obtaining and coordinating technical and financial assistance as needed from the private sector, corporations, foundations and all levels of government.

The Panhandle Lakes Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council, Inc. was originally established in 1964 as the Idaho-Washington RC&D, one of the first 10 areas in the United States authorized to receive assistance from USDA. Numerous revisions to the size of the area and to the Area Plan have been completed since then.

The current revision is an effort to continue to recognize and address the current conditions, trends, needs and opportunities in the five north Idaho Counties. The Plan helps focus efforts in those areas where the RC&D program can be most effective, namely land conservation, water management, community development and land management.

Map of the Area



Organizational Overview

Mission Statement

To provide leadership, improve and conserve regional, economic and natural resources which will enhance the quality the life in north Idaho.

Vision Statement

Community volunteers enhancing north Idaho.

Council Structure

The Panhandle Lakes RC&D Area includes the five north Idaho Counties. The Council is led by an Executive Board of Officers consisting of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. The Council also includes “sponsors”, at-large members and cooperative partners. All but the cooperative partners are eligible to vote and to hold an officer position.

Sponsors of the Council may include the Boards the County Commissioners the Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai and Shoshone Counties; the four Soil (& Water) Conservation Districts; the Coeur d’Alene Tribe and Kootenai Tribe of Idaho; incorporated Cities, Chambers the Commerce, Economic Development Districts and other special use districts. In addition, other eligible sponsors within the above named counties may apply for sponsorship and upon approval of their application by a majority of the members of the Council, may become sponsors.

Overview of the Area

General Description

The Panhandle Lakes RC&D Area is located in north Idaho, otherwise known as the “Panhandle.” The five counties located within the authorized area are Boundary, Bonner, Kootenai, Shoshone and Benewah. The area encompasses approximately 5,062,400 acres (*Idaho County Profiles*). Federal land accounts for approximately 52% of the total land ownership, with private ownership at 38% and State land at approximately 9% of the total. The 2006 U.S. Census Bureau estimate records the population of the 5 counties as 206,140.

Two Indian Tribal reservations are located in the area. Both Tribes are sponsors of the Panhandle Lakes RC&D Council. The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho’s tribal headquarters is located north of Bonners Ferry in Boundary County. The Coeur d’Alene tribal headquarters is in the city of Plummer which is in Benewah County.

Transportation

The area is served by 2 major highway systems, Interstate 90 from east to west and U.S. Highway 95 from north to south. Freight and rail services are available in many places throughout the area.

Spokane International Airport, just across the state line in Washington, is easily accessible from most areas. This medium-sized hub offers a full array of services with connecting flights to all parts of the United States and foreign countries.

Coeur d’Alene Airport is a general aviation facility providing service for air freight and private airplanes. It serves as a certified weather alternate for Spokane International Airport.

Other areas have limited facilities suited only for small aircraft. An exception is the Sandpoint Airport which has recently improved its facilities and is in a position to attract feeder airlines.

A new, free public transportation system serving Southern Kootenai and Western Benewah Counties, including the Coeur d'Alene Tribal Reservation is Citylink. Citylink is a partnership between the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the Kootenai Metropolitan Planning Organization, the State of Idaho and Kootenai County.

Water Resources

North Idaho contains an abundance of water resources including lakes, streams, rivers and aquifers. Just over 3% of the land area is water or wetlands.

Major rivers include the Kootenai, Clark Fork (major tributary to Lake Pend Oreille), Pend Oreille, Coeur d'Alene, St. Joe, Spokane and St. Maries. The St. Joe, the highest navigable river in the United States, and the Coeur d'Alene River are the major tributaries to Lake Coeur d'Alene.

Several scenic lakes ranging in size from less than one acre to several hundred acres dot the landscape, benefiting fish and wildlife and adding recreation and tourism opportunities. The Panhandle Hydrologic Basin contains approximately two-thirds of the lake acreage in the State of Idaho. The largest are Priest Lake, Lake Pend Oreille and Lake Coeur d'Alene. Northern Idaho ground water systems include the Coeur d'Alene River, the Silver Valley aquifer, the Rathdrum aquifer, the Kootenai River Valley system and the St Maries River and St Joe River ground water systems. The Rathdrum aquifer combines with the Spokane aquifer in the State of Washington to supply domestic water to over 500,000 people (*The Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer Atlas*). The Aquifer covers 322 miles and has a volume of about 10 trillion gallons. This source of water also provides irrigation for approximately 13,280 acres of agricultural land in Kootenai County (*2002-USDA-National Agricultural Statistics Service*).

Designated as a sole source aquifer in 1978, the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer was the first aquifer in Idaho and the second in the nation to receive sole source designation. The aquifer originates at the southern end of Lake Pend Oreille in northern Idaho and extends west under the Rathdrum Prairie in Idaho and the Spokane Valley in Washington. The aquifer is approximately 322 square miles in size with approximately 200 of that in Idaho and provides water to about 500,000 people.

The Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer is the only aquifer designated as a sensitive resource aquifer in Idaho, offering the strongest level of protection. (*Idaho Department of Environmental Quality*)

Land Use

Major land uses include agriculture, forestland, water/wetlands and urban. Wildlife management, fishing, hunting and recreation are also activities with these major land use areas. Mining has occurred throughout the region and has been a primary industry in Shoshone County.

Agriculture: Pasture/hayland, dry cropland and irrigated cropland are included within this major land use. Agricultural lands total 343,400 acres or 6.7% of all land area (*Idaho County Profiles*). The main crops grown are winter wheat, spring barley, peas, lentils and bluegrass. Lentils are grown for human consumption, and bluegrass is grown for turf grass seed.

Other specialty crops are being grown that do not constitute a significant portion of the total agricultural acreage but have added to the local economy. For example, hops have become an important crop in Boundary County, and wild rice is being grown commercially in certain wetland areas of Benewah County.

Forestland: Forestland accounts for 87% of the total area or 4,418,600 acres (*Idaho County Profiles*). This land use includes non-industrial private forestland, industrial forestland, as well as federal and state ownerships.

Species of softwood trees include ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, grand fir, lodge pole pine, western larch, western white pine and western red cedar. The higher elevation mountainous areas and ridge tops have mainly plant communities in the western hemlock and sub-alpine fir series. Certain lower areas support stands with a large proportion of hardwoods such as cottonwood, red alder, quaking aspen, birches and rocky mountain maple.

Fish and Wildlife: Fish and wildlife are found throughout the five counties comprising the RC&D area. The many types of land uses and mountainous backcountry provide a variety of habitat.

Fishing and hunting is “big business” in north Idaho. Purchases of licenses, equipment, hiring of guides and participation in fishing derbies held on larger lakes directly add to the local and state economies. North Idaho is a popular destination for out-of-state anglers and big game hunters. Money spent on fuel, supplies, food and lodging further contributes to the economy.

Threatened or Endangered (T&E) species can be found within the RC&D area. They include Bald Eagle, Bull Trout, Gray Wolf, Grizzly Bear, Lynx, Woodland Caribou and White Sturgeon (Kootenai River). Boundary County has more T&E species than any other county in the nation.

The Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge in Boundary County provides 2,774 total acres of habitat for a variety of wildlife, including water and marsh birds, waterfowl, raptors, muskrats, beaver, bear and moose.

Mining: Mining has played an important part in the history of north Idaho with individual mines scattered throughout the area. Shoshone County’s economy has been based on mining of silver, gold and zinc. Mining began in Shoshone County’s “Silver Valley” in the 1880s. In 1982, the Bunker Hill smelting operations ended, which had a severe impact on the area. Recently rising silver prices has helped the silver industry in the area.

A 21-square mile area of the “Silver Valley” is now one of the largest Superfund Sites in the United States. Concerns being addressed by the cleanup including heavy metals and toxic materials, which have been linked to elevated lead blood levels in children and pregnant women.

Climate

Climate in the area is characterized by cool, moist winters and warm, dry summers. Air temperatures generally decrease as elevation increases. Maximum air temperatures occur in the low lying valleys where average daily maximum temperatures are around 80 degrees Fahrenheit in July and August. Daily high summer temperatures can exceed 100 degrees in the valleys. January minimum temperatures average around 20 degrees in the valleys and even lower in the mountains. Temperatures below zero are not uncommon in the winter; a record low of -37 degrees has been recorded in Sandpoint.

Precipitation in the Panhandle Region increases with elevation. Average annual precipitation ranges from 20 to 40 inches in the lower elevations and-valleys. Along the Idaho-Montana border in Shoshone County, average annual precipitation is 70 inches and as high as 80 inches in south central Shoshone County. Monthly precipitation amounts are greatest from November to January and the least during July and August. This winter maximum precipitation pattern applies to the valleys as well as the higher elevations in the basin.

The growing season also decreases as elevations increase. The average consecutive frost free period (above 32 degrees) in the valley ranges from 120 days at Bonners Ferry to 100 days at Mullan. On the

average, the last frost in the spring occurs in mid-May or early June and the first frost in the fall usually occurs in mid-September.

A large portion of the land base is covered with snow during the winter. Average onset of the permanent seasonal snow pack is November 1. The maximum snow water content usually occurs around mid-April. Lower elevation snow usually melts in March or early April, while the higher elevation snow melts around June 1. Seasonal maximum snow water content ranges from 15 inches in the lower elevations to over 60 inches in the higher elevations. Snow water content as high as 100 inches and snow depths over 280 inches have been recorded in southern Shoshone County. Average annual snowfall ranges from 70 inches in the valley to well over 500 inches a year in the higher elevations.

Air Quality

Air quality in the Panhandle region continues to meet national standards in most areas. However, recent changes to the PM_{2.5} NAAQS (National Ambient Air Quality Standard for fine particulate matter with an aerodynamic size of 2.5 microns or less) have revealed that the Shoshone County City of Pinehurst will likely be designated as a non-attainment area for fine particulate. Contributing factors to the degraded air quality in this airshed include primarily woodstove smoke and open burning emissions. Non attainment designation requires the implementation of control measure to ensure that pollutant levels are reduced to below required limits in order to protect public health. Fine particulates are measured in other communities in the Panhandle as well. While results in these areas show concentrations below national standards several locations reveal levels of concern.

The burning of land clearing debris and open backyard burning continues to be a significant contributor to degraded air quality conditions during the fall through spring months in the Panhandle area. Local communities are becoming increasingly concerned with open burning activities in their jurisdiction and some are researching ways to restrict or limit this activity. Slash burning is also a significant endeavor in the region. Fortunately, most large timberland owners as well as state and federal land managers work within the strict confines of a burn prescription program implemented by the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group. This group is dedicated to avoiding negative impacts that unregulated slash burning could have on air quality.

Wood burning stoves are in use throughout the Panhandle area and also contribute substantially to increased concentrations of fine particulate in the atmosphere during the winter time especially during periods when surface level inversions build and trap smoke near the ground. Advancement in wood stove technology as well as education and outreach activities by DEQ are helping to reduce emissions from this activity in most areas.

Stationary sources, or facilities, in the region certainly contribute to pollution however DEQ implements a stringent air quality permit program that effectively limits a facility's emissions to levels below what would be considered harmful. Growth in this sector over recent years has not been significant.

At this time very little evaluation of secondary aerosols and other toxic pollutants has been undertaken in the Panhandle area with the exception of ground level ozone on the Rathdrum Prairie. Secondary pollutants are formed when different compounds present in the atmosphere react with each other to create a "secondary" pollutant. For example ozone forms when organic hydrocarbons bond with nitrogen oxides to produce ozone during periods of strong sunlight. The importance of understanding the chemical makeup of the local airshed is critical in evaluating several issues including potentially harmful depositional impacts on local surface water bodies. This issue becomes increasingly important as population grows and automobile emissions continue to increase.

With the substantial increase in population that the region has been experiencing lately one could expect some degradation in air quality conditions. Currently, the area has yet to see significant changes in the overall quality of the air. (IDEQ, 2/07)

Geology

The Panhandle Lakes RC&D Area is within the Northern Rocky Mountains Geomorphic Province with border influence of the Columbia Plateau Province. Geologically, four major episodes of events formed this region.

The earliest event was during the Precambrian Age about one billion years ago. The area was a narrow ocean basin and received thick deposits of sand, mud and lime minerals. These became sandstones, mudstones and limestone of the Belt Series formations. These sedimentary rocks were metamorphosed by later events, with some forming slate, marble, schist and gneiss. Most of the Panhandle is underlain by Precambrian Age Belt Series formations, and most of the exposed bedrock on the eastern side of the area is metamorphosed Belt Series sedimentary rock. These Precambrian rocks contain most of Idaho's mineral resources.

Intrusion of the Kanisku Batholith granite was the second major event, occurring during the Cretaceous Period about 70 to 80 million years ago. Older sediments were thrust-faulted, which formed the Coeur d'Alene mining district at this time. Bedrock in the western part of the area is mainly intruded granite and sheared Mylonite material from the faulting.

Columbia Plateaus flood basalts were deposited in the southwestern part of the area during Miocene time, about 16 million years ago. Much of the basalt bedrock is covered by glacial outwash materials. Lakes were formed in valleys dammed by basalt flows, depositing lakebed sediments and Tertiary Age fossils in bedded rocks associated with the basalt.

The fourth major events occurred between 100,000 and 15,000 years ago during the Pleistocene "Ice Age." Continental ice (large ice sheets) covered most of the valley areas, with only the higher mountain peaks exposed. These ice sheets were similar to the continental glacier of Greenland today. The region received enough snow that even the high mountain peaks were glaciated with alpine glaciers, similar to mountain glaciers of the Alps. Much of the surface topography and materials existing today result from the glacial episodes. The craggy, jagged peaks were eroded by the alpine glaciers, and mountain valleys were filled with moraine outwash deposits. The continental ice sheet extended as far south as Coeur d'Alene, leaving thick deposits of glacial till and pale lake silts as well as "erratic" boulders transported to the area and deposited as the ice melted. The continental glaciers also scoured some areas, leaving slick, polished bedrock exposed at the surface.

During the Pleistocene, many large lakes were formed as ice dammed then existing rivers. One of the largest in the northwest area was "Glacial Lake Missoula," in western Montana. The ice dam which formed the lake failed numerous times, washing lake water and debris westward through Idaho into the channeled scablands area of eastern Washington. These cyclic floods occurred at least 41 times, eroding Cabinet Gorge in the process.

The numerous lakes of the present Idaho panhandle area are leftovers from the "Ice Ages". The two largest are Coeur d'Alene Lake and Lake Pend Oreille. Even though they both resulted from glaciation, these two lakes were formed in very different ways. The continental ice sheet actually scoured out a deep, large trench in older soft lakebed sediments in the Purcell Valley. The ice lasted longer in this deep trench than in surrounding areas as the glaciers receded. This kept the trench from being filled with glacial debris. When the ice finally did melt, Lake Pend Oreille, over 1000 feet deep, was left behind. In contrast, the valley in which Coeur d'Alene Lake formed was never glaciated. The lake was formed when the southernmost edge of the Purcell ice lobe reached the St. Joe River. The ice sheet deposited a terminal moraine across the existing valley, forming a dam which backed up Coeur d'Alene Lake.

Mineral deposits are plentiful in the region and played an important part in its development. The Coeur d'Alene mining district began in 1881 as a placer gold discovery in stream gravels. The placer gold was not very productive, but silver and lead were soon discovered in rock ore and veins. Most of the deposits were discovered between 1884 and 1886. The ore is associated with the Lewis and Clark fault system,

which are 70 to 90 million years old. The faulting is strike-slip (lateral movement) and occurs in Precambrian age metamorphosed sedimentary rocks. The fault zone can be traced in a southeast trend from Spokane, Washington, to Missoula, Montana.

The Coeur d'Alene district has historically been one of the major lead-zinc-silver producing areas of the world. Since mining began in the early 1880s, mines in the 300-square-mile district have produced more than 2.89 billion dollars worth of silver, lead, zinc, copper and gold. The mining industry has declined in Shoshone County since the early 1980's.

Social and Economic Conditions

The demographic information contained in this section changes frequently. Updated information can be found at several sites, including Idaho Department of Commerce and Labor <http://cl.idaho.gov/portal/>.

Population and Employment Trends

The population in north Idaho is growing rapidly. The 2000 population for the five counties was 178,333. The 2006 US Census Bureau estimated population is 206,140. Kootenai County has experienced the largest increase with a 2000 population of 108,685 and an estimated 2006 population of 131,507.

The rural nature of north Idaho is changing. While the total population is increasing, the rural population is decreasing. In the past decade, according to "County Profiles of Idaho", the percentage of the population considered rural has decreased in all counties (Boundary County has changed from 100% rural in 1990 to 73% rural in 2002, Benewah County's change is from 100% to 68% in that same period). Measured in a different way, the 2002 Census of Agriculture shows that the total number of farms has actually increased from 2,053 to 2,290 in the five years from 1997 to 2002 and the total land in farms increased from 459,879 acres to 463,682 acres in those same five years.

The civilian labor force in the five counties increased over the last decade from 76,643 to 97,266. The annual average unemployment rates in 2006 ranged from 3.8 % to 7.3 %. (*Idaho Commerce & Labor*)

Timber, agriculture and mining in Shoshone County are the regions traditional mainstays. The economic base is diversifying, however. A variety of manufacturing industries have added jobs to the regions' traditional manufacturing mainstay, wood products. The recreation and tourism industry has expanded and several call centers have been added.

Tourism and population growth has fueled a construction boom that has allowed retail stores, health care providers, service businesses and government agencies to expand. The largest employment sectors for the region are service producing industries and government.

Per Capita Income

Per capita income for each of the five counties in the region was below the average for the rest of Idaho and the United States according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The average per capita income for the region in 2004 was \$21, 915 compared to \$25,476 for Idaho and \$30,906 for the United States.

County Information

BOUNDARY COUNTY

County Population*: 10,831

Cities*:

Bonnars Ferry	2,723
Moyie Springs	728

* U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 estimate

Primary Industries/Business

Timber and agriculture are the county's traditional mainstays. The County has diversified its economic base in the last two decades when Anheuser-Busch developed Elk Mountain Farms, a large hops farm, and when several ornamental tree nurseries and Christmas tree farms opened. Also, recent downtown improvements and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho's expansion of the Kootenai River Inn have added to the tourism industry potential.

Since 2003, the county suffered two significant economic blows when one of its two largest mills closed, followed by the closure of the Rocky Mountain Academy, a boarding school for troubled teens. The Academy has since been reopened by Idaho Educational Services. (*Idaho Commerce & Labor*).

Natural Resources

Approximately 90% of the county is forested. The next major land use is agriculture with 8.5% of the total land acres. (*Idaho County Profiles*)

BONNER COUNTY

County Population*: 41,275

The population grew in the county by 23 percent from 1995 to 2005, while Idaho's population grew 21 percent and the U.S. population grew 13 percent during the same period

Cities*:

Clark Fork	583	Oldtown	204	Kootenai	451
Dover	486	Ponderay	711		
East Hope	219	Priest River	1,925		
Hope	87	Sandpoint	8,206		

* U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 estimate

Primary Industries/Business

Leisure and hospitality jobs increased from 1,632 in 1994 to 1,730 in 2004. Schweitzer Mountain Resort's expansions have boosted winter employment at local motels, restaurants and stores. The biggest source of new jobs in the 1990s was Coldwater Creek, the Sandpoint mail-order company. *Manufacturing jobs rose 76 percent since 1995 while it fell 17 percent in the United States.* (*Idaho Commerce & Labor*)

Natural Resources

Over 84% of the land area is forested with almost 6% in agriculture. Major water bodies include Lake Pend Oreille and Priest Lake. Water accounts for approximately 9% of the county. (*Idaho County Profiles*)

KOOTENAI COUNTY

County Population*: 131,507

From 1995 to 2005 the Kootenai County's population grew 38%, while Idaho's grew 21%.

Cities:

Athol	692	Hayden Lake	553
Coeur d'Alene	41,328	Huetter	98
Dalton Gardens	2,382	Post Falls	24,515
Fernan Lake Village	185	Rathdrum	6,308
Harrison	282	Spirit Lake	1,621
Hauser	705	Stateline	29
Hayden	12,349	Worley	220

* U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 estimate

Primary Industry/Business

The County's economy has been strong due to a diversified manufacturing base, expansion of the tourism sector and addition of call centers. The tourism and population growth has furthermore fueled a construction boom and has allowed retail stores, health care providers, service businesses and government agencies to expand. In 2006, approximately 4,600 people work in the county's manufacturing businesses while 2,200 work at call centers.

In addition to manufacturers and call centers, retail, service, tourism and construction businesses have created so many job opportunities that the county has received considerable national attention as a boomtown area. (*Idaho Commerce & Labor*)

Natural Resources

Almost 77% of the county is forested with over 14% in agriculture. Water covers 4.5% of the county and 2.7% is urban. (*Idaho County Profiles*)

BENEWAH COUNTY

County Population*: 9,347

Cities*:

Plummer	998	Tensed	127	St. Maries	2,657
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* U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 estimate

Primary Industry/Business

Benewah County's economy remains heavily dependent on forest products, causing fluctuation in seasonal employment. After the summer of 2003, lumber and plywood prices improved markedly, allowing the lumber industry to increase employment. The county has only 65 jobs in manufacturing outside of forest products. The tourism sector employs fewer than 200 people. The Coeur d'Alene Tribe, a major employer has contributed to growth. (*Idaho Commerce & Labor*)

Natural Resources

Forestland accounts for 76% of Benewah County's land. Over 15% of Benewah County is in agriculture. (*Idaho County Profiles*)

SHOSHONE COUNTY

County Population*: 13,180

Cities*:

Kellogg	2,296	Smelterville	618
Mullan	791	Wallace	907
Osburn	1,459	Wardner	203
Pinehurst	1,614		

* U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 estimate

Primary Industry/Business

Higher silver prices and other developments are helping the silver mining industry, which has declined since it peaked in 1981. The two remaining major mines plan to expand production and employment over the next two years and Sunshine's new owner is exploring the possibility of reopening their mine.

Tourism is growing, aided by the expansion of Silver Mountain and the Lookout ski area. Growing numbers of hikers, bicyclists and snowmobilers are exploring the hundreds of miles of trails.

The county's retail and service sectors are growing and as population grows, tourism increases and incomes rise. After years of little growth, construction and real estate are booming and housing projects are underway throughout the Silver Valley. (*Idaho Commerce & Labor*)

Natural Resources

Over 96% of Shoshone County is forested with an additional 2% classified as rangeland. Only 0.1% of the county is in agriculture.

Resource Needs and Opportunities

This section is intended to identify current undesirable conditions (needs) and chances to improve those existing conditions (opportunities). For the most part, only the needs that the RC&D Council plans to address are mentioned, but other needs identified in the public input process are also acknowledged. This approach was taken to provide a more comprehensive view of existing conditions, plus it will better allow RC&D involvement in the future, if needed.

Land Conservation

Land conservation is defined in statute as the control of erosion and sedimentation.

- ◆ Soil erosion and sedimentation are on-going resource concerns, as reflected in all four Soil & Water Conservation Districts' (SWCD) 5- Year Resource Conservation Plans. Water induced erosion is present with all land-uses and can be accelerated by land use activities. Anti-degradation policies and programs implemented by various agencies, organizations and landowners are having a positive affect toward improving support of beneficial uses. Continued work is needed.

The RC&D program needs to explore opportunities to further assist their sponsors and partners with cooperative conservation efforts including planning, implementation and education. Addressing emerging conservation issues, accelerating efforts through implementation of the Farm Bill and helping implement the NRCS and other USDA strategic plans are all issues to be addressed in this Area Plan as well as subsequent Annual Plans.

Water Management

Water management is defined in statute as the conservation, use and quality of water, including irrigation and rural water supplies; the mitigation of floods and high water tables; the repair and improvement of reservoirs; the improvement of agricultural water management; and the improvement of water quality.

- ◆ Water quality of the District's lakes and streams is affected by both non-point and point source activities, including shoreline management, logging, mining, farming, construction, urban (stormwater) runoff, wastewater disposal and recreational activities. An example of Panhandle Lakes RC&D involvement in this area is assisting the Bonner and Kootenai-Shoshone Soil & Water Conservation Districts with "Lake*A*Syst projects on Lake Pend Oreille and Hauser Lakes respectively.
- ◆ Stormwater runoff and wastewater disposal treatment are issues related to urban growth. Improved storm drainage practices are particularly important where population centers are situated over vulnerable aquifers or near water bodies.
- ◆ The majority of the irrigated cropland is found on the Rathdrum Prairie in Kootenai County. There are 4 irrigation districts remaining which irrigate less than 10,000 acres. The amount of irrigation is being reduced dramatically due to urban development and loss of cropland.
- ◆ Nutrient enrichment is a major concern with lakes and water bodies. Nutrient management is needed; with the exception of the Kootenai River where nutrients are being introduced.
- ◆ Surface and groundwater contamination from chemical pollution, including pesticides and herbicides is a concern.
- ◆ Issues related to wetlands were noted as a concern by local governments and the public.
- ◆ Recent and projected urban and industrial growth has raised concerns about the potential future impacts on water quality and quantity of the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie aquifer. Water resource concerns include growing demands on groundwater and declining groundwater levels, low stream flow in reaches of the Spokane River and water quality problems associated with changing land use activities. Efforts to address these concerns include implementation of an adjudication process and establishment of a Water Measurement District and an Aquifer Protection District.
- ◆ Seasonal flooding can be a problem in flood prone areas and during spring run-off or during rain on snow events.

Community Development

Community development is defined in statute as the development of resource-based industries; the protection of rural industries from natural resource hazards; the development of adequate rural water and waste disposal systems; the improvement of recreation facilities; the improvement of rural housing; the provision of adequate health and education facilities; the satisfaction of essential transportation and communication needs; and the promotion of food security, economic development and education.

- ◆ Communities recognize the need for recreation facilities and "open space", including parks, trails, ball fields, skate parks, rock climbing areas and water-based recreation, etc.
- ◆ Access to existing recreation opportunities is limited in some areas. The growing population and the volume of users, including those from out-of-state is putting increased pressure on recreation facilities.
- ◆ Communities need assistance with planning and funding community facilities and infrastructure projects. These are not only large infrastructure needs, but also small "quality of life" projects. Examples include improvement to libraries, senior centers and preservation of historic buildings.

- ◆ As the economy has begun the transition from being primarily natural resource based, many areas are diversifying to include recreation, tourism (including agritourism), and development of value-added resources. Assistance is needed to help local governments; organizations, cooperatives and individuals with business creation and expansion.
- ◆ The changing economy is leading to a growing problem with low paying jobs and lack of affordable housing for private and public local workers (housing/wage ratio).
- ◆ Health programs and education facilities need improvement.
- ◆ Many organizations exist that need support while developing their structure as well as assistance with grant writing and fund raising.
- ◆ Additional high-speed internet capabilities would help attract businesses with higher paying jobs.
- ◆ The need for transportation alternatives has been noted, including bicycle and pedestrian trails, and “rails for trails” type projects.
- ◆ Interest in the arts, including the performing arts and public art has been expressed in some communities.
- ◆ Some communities have well established urban & community forestry programs. Others have not taken significant steps to manage their urban forests or to establish sustainable programs. RC&D can continue to help interested communities, primarily through the Community Forestry Assistant.

Land Management

Land management defined in statute as energy conservation that includes the production of energy crops; the protection of agricultural land as appropriate from conversion to other uses; farmland protection; and the protection of fish and wildlife habitats.

- ◆ Alternative energy development is increasing in importance. One example of how RC&D is involved is through assisting with implementation of the “Fuels for Schools” program.
- ◆ There is potential for utilization of woody and ag-related biomass for cogeneration of electricity and ethanol production.
- ◆ Noxious weeds are a significant problem in all five counties. The RC&D is involved with several multi-county and state-wide noxious weed projects.
- ◆ Accelerated building and development has an impact on access to public recreation and is raising questions regarding jurisdiction issues. Responsible government agencies find themselves behind in developing and implementing programs and management practices and setting financial priorities.
- ◆ Wildland fire protection is an emerging high priority in the entire area, made more urgent by the level of development in the wildland-urban interface. RC&Ds can assist agencies, fire districts, Counties and others implement Idaho’s National Fire Plan strategies.
- ◆ Conversion of agricultural lands and forests to development is occurring at a rapid rate. Most notably, this is occurring in Kootenai and Bonner Counties. Acquisition and protection of open space is reflected in several city and county comprehensive plans. There are opportunities for the RC&D program to become more involved in these efforts.
- ◆ Utilization of Wood Products (value-added) including small diameter wood presents an opportunity for development of industry, businesses or cooperatives.

- ◆ The Healthy Forest Initiative and planning and implementation strategies such as Stewardship contracting provide opportunities to address forest and interface issues while offering potential benefits to communities.
- ◆ There are several Threatened or Endangered species found in the five county area. Management of these T&E species presents a challenge to meet federal mandates while not negatively impacting the local economy.
- ◆ Historic mining activity in the Coeur d'Alene River watershed has produced heavy metals. An EPA Superfund site was designated for an area in Shoshone County.
- ◆ Air quality in the Panhandle region continues to meet national standards in most areas. Contributing factors to degraded air quality in some areas include woodstove smoke, open burning emissions, the burning of land clearing debris and open backyard burning. The burning of bluegrass residue has become a contentious issue in the urban rural interface areas.
- ◆ Development of alternative crops and value added specialty crops is needed. The RC&D program can assist small farm enterprises.
- ◆ Development easements and conservation reserve programs need to be increased or started in order to preserve open space and aesthetic qualities of private land.

Goals, Objectives & Strategies

Included in this section are long range goals, objectives and strategies intended to address the needs and opportunities identified and described previously. The Panhandle Lakes RC&D Council's roles are to assist local people, to initiate action and work in partnership with others through the scoping, planning and implementation phases. Achieving these goals and objectives will require cooperation with various other organizations, agencies and private individuals.

The goals, objectives and strategies are dynamic and will be used to develop specific action items in the Council's Annual Plan of Operations. They will be monitored and adjusted as economic, social and natural resource needs change.

Plan Element: Land Conservation

Sub-Element: Control of erosion and sedimentation

Goal: Maintain and improve the quality of the area's natural resources by reducing erosion and sedimentation.

Objective: Participate in and support education efforts to increase landowner and public awareness of resource issues and accelerate application of best management practices.

Strategies:

1. Participate in the development and expansion of a regional erosion and sedimentation certification programs by 2009. (125 builders or developers certified, 1 webpage maintained)
2. Assist 4 Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) with development and maintenance of web pages focused on program information and soil conservation by 2009.

Objective: Assist with implementation of conservation programs and best management practices.

Strategies:

1. Assist NRCS and 4 Soil and Water Conservation Districts with Farm Bill information outreach, implementation and coordination by 2011. (3 workshops, 1 CSP program implementations, 1 ACES position)
2. Assist NRCS Field Offices, 4 SWCDs and or landowners with project development and program application by 2011. (3 Conservation Innovation Grants or other Farm Bill specific programs)

Objective: Assist with development of watershed or area-wide conservation plans.

Strategies:

1. Assist with completion of 3 Rapid Watershed Assessments by 2011.
2. Assist Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) with formation of 3 watershed coordinating groups by 2011.
3. Work with SWCDs or watershed groups to develop watershed plans and/or improve capacity to complete watershed plans by coordinating training by 2011.

Plan Element: Water Management

Sub-Element: Conservation, use and quality of water, including irrigation and rural water supplies; the mitigation of floods and high water tables; the repair and improvement of reservoirs; the improvement of agricultural water management; and the improvement of water quality.

Goal: Maintain and improve the conservation, management and quality of the area's water resources.

Objective: Support & assist with public information/out reach efforts.

Strategies:

1. Assist SWCDs and Lake Associations with planning and implementation of information programs focused on near-shore homeowners by 2010. (Complete 2 Lake*A*Syst projects, 100 homeowners applying "BMPs")
2. Assist 2 lake associations with webpage development focused on water quality activities by 2008.
3. Assist with water awareness/conservation in urban areas by 2009.

Objective: Improve fish habitat, recreation and water quality through planning and implementation of water management and water quality projects.

Strategies:

1. Assist Counties, lake associations and others with specific projects targeting control of Eurasian Water Milfoil by 2010. (4 projects completed-600 acres)

Objective: Support efforts to improve water management and water quality on Rathdrum Prairie.

Strategies:

1. Assist as requested in efforts to improve water quality (nutrients) and water management (quantity) over the Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer by 2011.

Objective: Support & assist RC&D Sponsors and partners with development of watershed or area wide conservation plans.

Strategies:

1. Assist Soil & Water Conservation Districts and other partners with planning and implementation of 2-319 Water Quality projects by 2010.

Plan Element: Community Development

Sub-Element: Development of resource-based industries; the protection of rural industries from natural resource hazards; the development of adequate rural water and waste disposal systems; the improvement of recreation facilities; the improvement of rural housing; the provision of adequate health and education facilities; the satisfaction of essential transportation and communication needs; and the promotion of food security, economic development and education.

Goal: Develop and improve community infrastructure, economy and quality of life.

Objective: Help communities develop sustainable urban & community forestry programs by 2011.

Strategies:

1. Help 10 communities achieve or maintain Tree City USA status.
2. Form 10 sustainable community tree committees.
3. Promote intercommunity tree committee(s) coordination (2)
4. Assist with development of ordinances that address street tree issues (5).
5. Assist with completion of 6 street tree inventories.
6. Assist with development of sustainable 6 community forestry management plans.
7. Assist with application for 5 community forestry related grants.
8. Implement 20 community forestry promotional and educational awareness activities.
9. Help with 20 community Arbor Day celebrations.
10. Promote School participation in Arbor Day Poster contest (20)
11. Coordinate bare-root tree ordering among communities (20).

Objective: Promote planned development of recreation, tourism and interpretive sites that will add economic diversity while being sensitive to local customs, social and cultural resources.

Strategies:

1. Assist with planning and development of 5 recreation areas including trails and parks by 2011.

2. Assist with development of 2 natural resource education facilities by 2010.
3. Promote agritourism through development of 5 self guided tours and/or on-farm alternative (value-added) enterprises by 2011.
4. Assist communities with public input processes by 2011. (2 projects)

Objective: Develop a diverse and environmentally sustainable economy through business and job creation or expansion.

Strategies:

1. Develop and/or market 10 alternative value-added businesses by 2009.
2. Help 15 specialty producers expand marketing of products by 2009.
3. Assist with formation of 2 cooperatives or associations to improve product development and marketing by 2009.

Objective: Assist with improvement of community services.

Strategies:

1. Cooperate as appropriate with 4 County/Area Economic Development Districts by 2011.
2. Provide information and direct technical assistance to 6 Gem Community groups by 2011.
3. Improve community infrastructure, including senior centers, food banks, libraries, public and historic buildings by 2011. (5 projects)

Objective: Address urban-rural interface issues, including natural disasters that affect communities.

Strategies:

1. Help Counties implement fire and all-disaster mitigation plans as identified in the “Idaho Statewide Implementation Strategy” by 2011.
2. Participate in 3 community and regional processes that address issues affecting natural and human resources by 2011.
3. Assist with information outreach with maintenance of Hazardous Fuel Treatment websites by 2009. (5)

Objective: Provide leadership development and training.

Strategies:

1. Assist 5 community groups with organizational support, including non-profit status, bylaws development, etc by 2011.
2. Identify needs and provide training in grant writing and other community issues by 2011.

Plan Element: Land Management

Sub-Element: Energy conservation including the production of energy crops; the protection of agricultural land as appropriate from conversion to other uses; farmland protection; and the protection of fish and wildlife habitats.

Goal: Promote land use that will maintain a sustainable resource base, contribute to alternate energy solutions and protect fish and wildlife habitats.

Objective: Develop alternative energy.

Strategies:

1. Help implement bio-energy strategies, including “Fuels for Schools & Beyond” by 2011. (5 schools or public buildings)
2. Provide assistance to SWCDs, groups and landowners with development of alternative energy through production of energy crops by 2011. (3 projects)
3. Assist regional and county efforts to utilize biomass and/or waste for energy production by 2011. (2 biomass facilities or feasibility studies)
4. Investigate need for on-farm energy audits through state-wide RC&D project by 2009.

Objective: Participate in local, state and regional efforts involving conservation and management of natural resources, including land treated for fish and wildlife habitat.

Strategies:

1. Provide administrative support to Cooperative Weed Management Areas by 2008. (2-CWMAs)
2. Provide administrative support to consortiums developing weed biocontrol methods by 2008. (2-Biocontrol consortiums)
3. Participate in county-wide initiatives that address resource issues that affect the county by 2011.

Objective: Maintain and improve conservation and management of forest resource.

Strategies:

1. Improve genetic quality of tree seedlings and increase availability of high quality cones by becoming member of tree improvement cooperative and seed orchard group by 2009. (1 seed orchard established)
2. Improve genetic quality of tree seedlings and increase availability of high quality seed by assisting with cone processing by 2011. (100 bushels collected/processed)
3. Assist 4 SWCDs with completion of yearly seedling program, including collection and processing of cones, to replenish seed bank by 2011. (750,000 seedlings planted on 1500 acres)
4. Cooperate with state and federal agencies in conducting regional information and education conferences and workshops by 2010. (7 conferences/workshops)
5. Provide information to landowners on available professional forestry assistance by 2008. (1 forestry assistance directory updated)

6. Improve the forest resource and community infrastructure by supporting stewardship contracting projects by 2011. (1 project)

Objective: Protect agricultural and forestland from conversion to other uses.

Strategy:

1. Help SWCD's, communities and others with availability and feasibility of implementing various land acquisition and conservation programs by 2010. (Farm and Ranchland Conservation Program, Forest Legacy, conservation easements, etc).

Current and Potential Partnerships with USDA and Others

The Panhandle Lakes RC&D program is effective largely because of the cooperation and strong partnerships that have been formed with agencies, units of government and organizations. Various projects have been completed successfully because of those partnerships. Examples of those partnerships have included the following:

- ◆ USDA Forest Service
 - Northern Region
 - Idaho Panhandle National Forest
 - Ranger Districts
- ◆ USDA Rural Development
- ◆ Idaho Department of Lands
- ◆ Idaho Division of Environmental Quality
- ◆ Bureau of Land Management
- ◆ Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- ◆ University of Idaho Cooperative Extension
- ◆ Panhandle Area Council
- ◆ Panhandle Health District
- ◆ The Nature Conservancy
- ◆ Inland Northwest Land Trust
- ◆ Local Lake Associations
- ◆ County Weed Departments
- ◆ Noxious Weed Associations
- ◆ Chambers of Commerce
- ◆ Coeur d'Alene Tribe
- ◆ Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
- ◆ Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- ◆ County Government
- ◆ Various Cities

Linkages to the USDA NRCS Strategic Plan

The projects that are adopted by the Panhandle Lakes RC&D Council are varied in type and scope. Those projects often link to one or more of the specific *USDA NRCS Overarching Strategies, Mission Goals & Outcomes*.

Primarily, the projects in north Idaho address the following *Overarching Strategies*:

- ◆ Cooperative Conservation
- ◆ Watershed Approach

There are emerging opportunities for projects linking to:

- ◆ Market-based Approach

Linkages are primarily found to these *Mission Goals & Outcomes*:

- ◆ High Quality Productive Soils
- ◆ Clean and Abundant Water
- ◆ Healthy Plant and Animal Communities
- ◆ Working Farm and Ranch Lands

There are opportunities for additional project linkages to:

- ◆ Clean Air
- ◆ Adequate Energy Supply

Compliance Statements and Signatures

The Panhandle Lakes RC&D Council's program will be conducted in compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions as contained in Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (P. L. 100-259) and other nondiscrimination statutes; namely, Section 504, of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and in accordance with regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (7CFR-15, Subparts A&B) which provide that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, or handicap/disability be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial (or technical) assistance from the Department of Agriculture or any agency thereof.

The Panhandle Lakes RC&D Council agrees that the signing of this document constitutes agreement to comply with federal laws concerning restrictions on lobbying, a drug-free workplace, and responsibilities for procurement, suspension, and disbarment.

The Panhandle Lakes RC&D Council has had this application reviewed by the state. Comments made through the state single point of contact have been considered prior to submission of the application and that all applicable procedures have been followed. An environmental impact statement will not be prepared during the development of the area plan, but an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement will be prepared concurrently with the development of each project, when applicable, in accordance with federal procedures.

Chairman
Panhandle Lakes RC&D Council

Date

Secretary
Panhandle Lakes RC&D Council

Date

State Conservationist
NRCS-Idaho

Date

Appendix:

Plan Revision and Public Participation Process

The Panhandle Lakes RC&D Area Plan has been revised with involvement of a wide range of local, state and federal partners and interested parties. Initially the revision was drafted by the Area Plan Revision Committee which included a cross section of Council members. A variety of methods were used to gather information and public input, including the use of survey forms, web pages, existing strategic plans, census information, presentations at meetings and personal interviews.

Specific activities included, but were not limited to:

- Area Plan Revision committee designated 3/05
- First meeting of Area Plan Committee, Plan of Work developed 5/05
- Second meeting of Area Plan Committee 7/14
- Gathering information from existing strategic and comprehensive plans 5/05- 12/05
- Information placed on PLRCD webpage 8/17/05
- Link provide to Post Falls City Webpage 9/1/05
- Revised sections reviewed by Area Plan Committee 11/28/05
- Sponsor survey developed. Distribution begun using several methods 8/05
- Met with numerous groups, sponsors and agencies requesting input Year round
- Display (with survey) at North Idaho Fair 8/24-26/05
- Draft plan prepared and presented at Council meeting 3/06
- Public input section on Council meeting agenda at Council mtgs. 3/06-7/06
- Draft plan to RC&D State Program Manager 7/06
- Additional input and revision 8/07
- Final plan and distribute for signatures 9/07

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