



TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP #1: SUMMARY

May 25, 2022

ATTENDEES

Project Team

- Darcie White, Clarion Associates
- Paul Donegan, Clarion Associates
- Matt Prosser, EPS
- Brian Clarkson, T-O Engineers
- Joy Hill, Park County
- Kim Dillivan, Park County

Technical Working Group

- Ben McDonald, Park County Public Works
- Bill Yetter, Town of Meeteetse
- Brian Edwards, Park County Public Works

- Ann Trosper, Powell-Clarks Fork Conservation District
- Cade Powell, BLM
- Carmen Horne-McIntyre, Powell-Clarks Fork Conservation District
- Casey McQuiston, USFS
- Cathy Icenogle, Legacy Reserves
- Jack Hoffman, WYDOT
- Linda Cope, WDA
- Mary Reed, Lakeview Irrigation District
- Todd Frost, WYDOT
- Todd Stowell, City of Cody
- Tony Rutherford, Northwest Rural Water District

SUMMARY

Introductions

- Last meeting, there was a desire for more coordination on this project with service providers and other stakeholders.
- Everyone received a preview of the State of the County Report draft prior to the meeting.
- Review of project progress and what's next.

Overview of State of the County Report

- Three parts:

- Countywide Conditions and Trends (People, Economics, Land Use, and Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources and Land Use)
- 12 Planning Area Snapshots (Trends and Key Issues, Land Use Characteristics, Economy, Historic and Cultural Resources, Development Suitability)
- Map Portal – offers multiple tabs with multi-subject themes (e.g., Planning Areas, Land Use, Ownership, Natural/Historic/Cultural Resources, Population, Zoning, Ag and Ranch Lands, Development Suitability).
- Population and Employment Projections
 - Historic trends in the past 20 years shows growth of about 200 people into the county per year.
- Housing and Employment Demand
 - Near-term focus on countywide demand
 - Translate to high growth planning areas during Phase 4
- Prime Agriculture
- Other gaps/issues to address?

Discussion:

- Migration has been cyclical.
- Natural growth (born vs. death) has been declining.
- Forecast growth of 108 residents per year. Lower than the trend during the recent past. The reason for that is due to migration and birth/death patterns, as well as trends in growth.
- We believe the state numbers are underestimating the demand.
- We want to be sure we are planning for the appropriate amount of demand.
- The numbers mostly came from 2019-2020 Census information.
- Mary Reed stated that irrigation districts have seen an increase in subdivisions and requests for water plan reviews.
- Bill Yetter, Meeteetse – one of the issues we are seeing is that the development is occurring out in the County rather than next to cities. Our statistical departments are not keeping up with that trend. He sees more growth outside of town; decrease in town.
- Brian Edwards, Park County Public Works, said addressing and ROW permits in the rural area have increased over the years. Their numbers are way up in the last two years. A trend of people moving into the unincorporated areas.
- Ann Trosper, Powell-Clarks Fork – now seeing 4-5 subdivision requests per month. Well over 1,000 acres of prime farmland has been consumed by subdivisions. This impacts the irrigation districts in that they don't deal with a few individual landowners, they now deal with many. They also see the rapid increase in costs to buy or rent housing. People starting out with new careers can't afford to live here. Near where she lives, the home prices have exploded. Also, Cody is an aging town. Most of the people coming in are past the age of starting families. That has some negative impacts down the road as far as who will buy the land 20 years from now.
- Matt Prosser – the people moving in have a higher income than those living here. The demographic data is not revealing the trends that we are seeing locally.
- Todd Stowell, City of Cody Planner, in 2018 had 37; 2019 31, 2020 – 31; 2021 – 52.

- Darcie White – sounds like putting broader brackets on the population growth may help.
- Matt Prosser – permits for commercial uses has increased significantly since 2016.
- Jack Hoffman, WYDOT, said he has seen an increase in the past few years over what was seen previously for commercial accesses and subdivisions. He can look at numbers for the past 4 or 5 years and get numbers to us.
- Some areas have very low populations and low permitting numbers
- Tony Rutherford, NRWD – it is concentrated development for them; not a huge uptick in growth districtwide- see it in rural Powell primarily; in the last year one service area grew by 8% and another by 11%. Countywide the growth is more like 2-3%. He has a table that an engineer put together for another project. Shows percent grow over last four years.
- Joy Hill, Park County Planning asked if utilities might track their use increases or connection increases.
- Matt Prosser, EPS said consumption number may not be useful for direct inference.
- Tony said they track both demand and connections for their water use. Their use/demand has been higher. Some of the subdivisions in the rural Powell area we've seen developers abandon raw water rights and landowners now want to use NRWD water to irrigate.
- Darcie White, Clarion – asked if Tony would have information on the number of tap requests per mile and how that may have changed over time.
- Tony Rutherford said he could try. In the past, on an average year they would add 20 customer district-wide. And maybe work on one or two subdivision projects that require new mains and services. In the last couple of years we have worked on probably 20 subdivision projects and 200 new services altogether. This trend hurts staffing, supplies, etc. They can't keep up.
- Darcie White, Clarion – part of the challenge is putting some actual numbers to these trends.
- Cade Powell, BLM – they are seeing an increase in dispersed camping and seeing more people with RVs on public lands because they are renting their homes out as AirBNBs. Getting seasonal staff on board has been a nightmare. There are no rentals available and what is available is too expensive. On seasonal wages they can't make it. There is an increasing in recreation. As a homeowner and resident in the County, he is feeling the pinch in the number of people. He said he agrees that he is part of the problem – they bought small acreage in the rural area. He said people fill out SF299 forms to get access to private property through BLM lands. The increase hasn't been as crazy. What is crazy is a lot of the new owners come in do not have background in public land use and rules. The time spent educating people has gone up significantly. He said there are certain areas highlighted in their RMP that can be disposed of. Now more focused on recreation and access than ag, grazing, etc. Those acreages for disposable lands are enumerated in the RMP.
- Linda Cope, Wyoming Department of Ag – how is dispersed camping impacting permittees?
- Cade Powell, said it is not. They are camping in pseudo-parking areas. People are just pulling off the road and camping in areas with existing disturbance.
- Linda Cope – in other areas, seeing gates being broken, cattle being harassed, tanks being ruined.
- Brian Edwards, Public Works – when it comes to Bureau of Rec Lands – the original intent was for irrigation purposes – a lot of it no longer serves that purpose or anything related to ag or rec. They work with them and often wonder why some of the land is still under BOR purview.
- Mary Reed – there are a lot of agricultural leases on those lands that may not be reflected in a way the County can see. There are a lot of leases for Bureau land through the irrigation districts – for ag

purposes. While it may not appear that there is a purpose or use, it may just be that it isn't obvious. May somehow be able to see

- Casey McQuiston, USFS, they are experiencing a "human tsunami"; this time last year, of all places on top of the Beartooth Hwy they had an area the size of a Walmart parking lot with cars – it is not a parking lot. They were on the alpine meadow to ski. It was unbelievable how many people were there. They are seeing dispersed camping anywhere people can pull off. People are taking RVs into places that normally would be nearly impassable. They are seeing an increase in use. USFS is not seeing the increased use causing problems with their grazing permittees; they are seeing issues with people not understanding the fence out law; as far as land disposal, they typically do a land exchange and it has to be something they really want – desirable tract, something that would consolidate ownership for them. Not an often occurrence. The agency as a whole has put a hold on new cabins/rec residences or lots for such on their lands. Those come with a stipulation that they are recreational residences, not primary residences.
- Cade Powell, BLM – with the BOR land that is no longer being used for the purposes of moving water to the West, if there is any work to be done with that land, transfers, recreation of public purposes leases – that comes back to BLM. They just did a transfer to Park County to give BOR land to the Shooting Complex. Also doing the same with Heart Mtn. Interpretive Center.
- Darcie White, Clarion – question about ag. One of the things they are hearing is concern about the loss of ag land/conversion of ag land for development purposes. Working strategies to prioritize ag lands. We have been overlaying prime ag lands with other layers. The prime ag land is a much narrower band than the strictly irrigated lands.
- Matt Prosser – we do want to look closely at those prime ag lands and subdivision impacts in those areas.
- Darcie White – we need to put a finer point on prime ag land vs. irrigated land generally;
- Mary Reed – would like to know how prime farmland is defined.
- Darcie White – prime farmland definition is from the USDA; as far as irrigation districts we have them mapped.
- Joy Hill – provided explanation about identifying high quality ag lands for developing a new ag overlay; we don't want to say that just because land is irrigated, it may not be good for development to occur there. We want to pinpoint the most critical areas being used for ag that we want to absolutely protect.
- Linda Cope – it would be interesting to identify the key ag lands; there are conservation easements also.
- Darcie White – this is an important nut to crack. As we put parameters around it, we would like others to weigh in on it. The document will be open for changes and input for a long time.
- Would like to see more activities, places to hang out, and educational and career opportunities for young people
- Worried about the cost of living, especially housing, and the impacts on who can make a life in Park County
- Supported economic development of new and existing businesses that 1) provide job and career opportunities, 2) make it easier to shop locally, and 3) balance the needs of residents and visitors

- Would like to see investments in making Park County more livable—including better roads, more reliable internet and cell service, safe places to walk and bike, and improved public spaces and amenities.
- Students recognized that money, the relatively small population, land availability, the economy, resistance to change, the local climate, and getting people on the same page could present barriers to the ideas and issues they identified.
- Most students (as part of these meetings) did not plan to stay in Park County after graduation, but some of those that plan to leave for educational or career opportunities, or to do something different, would consider returning if Park County was affordable and offered enough opportunities.

Next Steps

- County staff to follow up with folks on the call who had additional data points that may help inform population projections (Park County Public Works, City of Cody, Northwest Rural Water District)
- Community Meetings coming up in June – check project website for details
- Next TWG meeting scheduled for September