

OPEN SPACE AND PUBLIC LANDS



7.1 STATEMENT OF INTENT

It is important that open spaces be conserved.

7.2 BACKGROUND AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

Agricultural land, geological features, river valleys, and public lands compose a unique and special setting in Albany County. Open space is essential to the quality of life in the county and a key element in the vistas and wide open feel of western character.

Open space, in a broad sense, is land not used for buildings or structures. Even though about a third of the land in Albany County is public land, often the open space that we see on a daily basis is privately owned. In Albany County, open space must not be seen as land left over after development or land yet to be developed. It is too much a vibrant part of our identity. Protecting open spaces will ensure access to the outdoors for current and future generations.

Albany County is home to an active, outdoor-oriented population who value their county's scenic setting. Residents see open space as a key factor in determining the quality of life for themselves and in the county in general.

Currently Albany County has developed areas ranging from fully incorporated municipalities, Laramie and Rock River, to semi-concentrated non-incorporated communities, which include Centennial and Woods Landing. Several scattered developed areas of semi-concentrated privately-owned subdivisions exist as well; these areas include Jelm, Nine-Mile, Garrett, and Marshall. Protecting open space ensures access for future generations.

The balance of Albany County land is utilized by privately-owned agricultural operations that occupy a mix of land ownership made up of privately-owned lands, State of Wyoming trust lands, and federally-owned Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service lands (see Map 7.1, Public Lands). Albany County includes extensive Medicine Bow National Forest (MBNF) lands within its boundaries. The MBNF is located in three areas of the county: the Snowy Range, the Laramie Range near Laramie, and the Laramie Peak area.

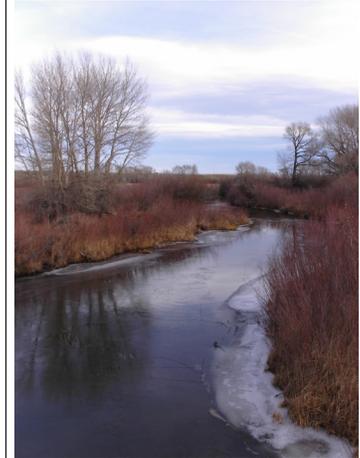
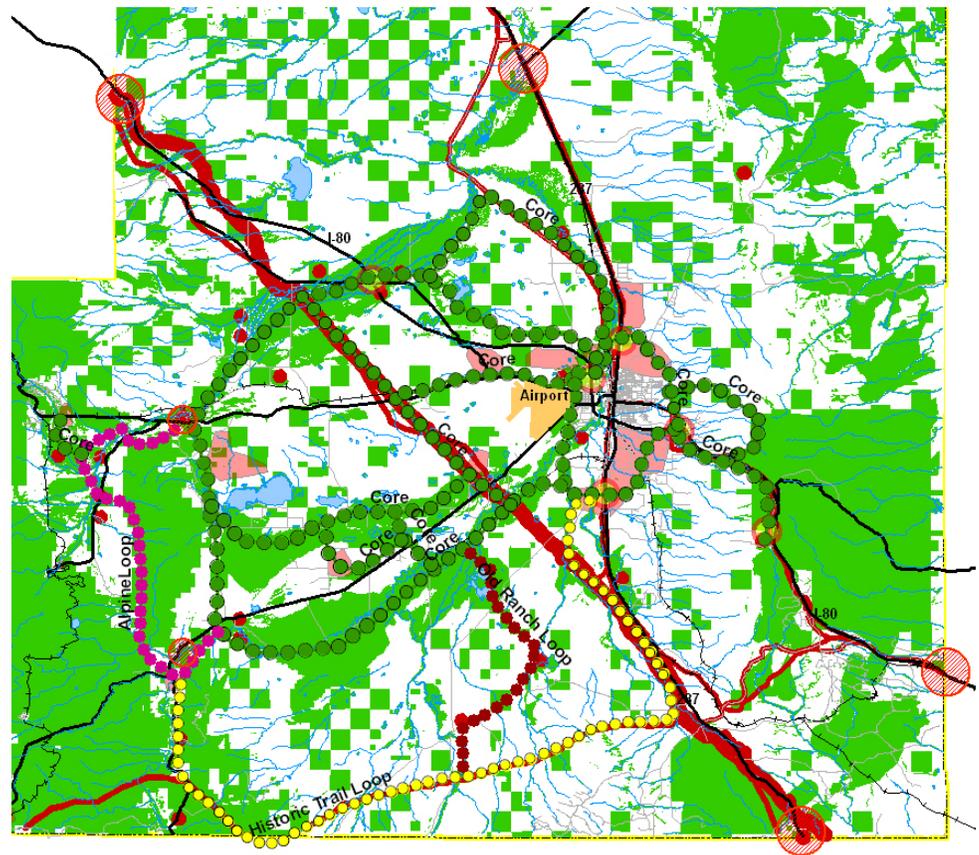


Figure 7.1:
Suggested trail system.

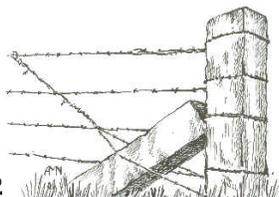


Recreation access (hiking, biking, horseback riding, bird watching) on private lands is limited. However, recreational use of public lands in the county is extensive. River recreation is almost nonexistent due to extensive fencing and lack of water.

Additional efforts to conserve agricultural land, and therefore open space, are discussed in Chapter 5 of this plan. The details of intergovernmental relations are discussed in Chapter 4. See Appendix 6 for more information on approaches to land protection.

7.3 OPEN SPACE AND PUBLIC LANDS OBJECTIVES

- OS1. Protect the county's identity and quality of life by conserving valuable open spaces and public lands and the services that they contribute.
- OS2. Concentrate growth near existing developed areas on semi-productive agricultural lands and lands with low levels of environmental and natural resources, in order to promote growth efficiency and development with a small footprint.
- OS3. Construct or extended greenways to create open space corridors that provide non-motorized connections between neighborhoods and activity centers such as schools, parks and commercial areas.
- OS4. Preserve existing recreational opportunities and develop new recreational facilities with cooperation of property owners and appropriate government agencies.



- OS5. Enhance access to public lands and lands with natural and environmental resources.

7.4 IMPLEMENTATION

STRATEGIES

1. Develop funding sources and adopt programs for open space. Gather support from other agencies, enlist land trusts, and obtain grants. (1, 3)
2. Require that open space be provided with new subdivisions and that those areas utilize open space design principles, such as clustering. (1, 3)
3. Maintain or enhance existing level of public lands access. (Research and develop a land trade/land consolidation program with the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service to consolidate public and private lands, in order to maintain or improve access and wildlife management and constrain trades/consolidation locally within the county.) (1, 3)
4. Involve the community in the conservation and stewardship of open spaces through committees, workshops, volunteer organizations, and fund raising. (1)

ACTIONS

- Develop and adopt an open space and trails master plan. The plan shall include guidelines for integrating trail development in the county and the acquisition of open space, which will parallel the efforts to develop funding sources for just compensation. (1)
- Amend rural subdivision regulations. Include an incentive program to encourage voluntary protection/preservation of open lands that includes density bonuses, transfer of development rights, tax credits, conservation easements, etc. (1, 2, 3)
- Adopt regulations that ensure housing and other structures blend with the environment to add to the visual sense of open space. (1)

7.5 RELATED DOCUMENTS

Rawlins Resource Management Plan: guides management of Bureau of Land Management lands for the Rawlins Resource Area, including Albany County (in progress 2007)

Medicine Bow National Forest Plan: guides management of Medicine Bow National Forest Land within Albany County (2003)

Comprehensive Conservation Plan for Laramie Plains National Wildlife Refuges: provides direction and guidance for Bamforth National Wildlife Refuge, Hutton Lake National Wildlife Refuge, and Mortenson Lake National Wildlife Refuge (in progress 2007)

