

## **Chapter 3: COMMUNITY PROFILE**

### **The Physical Environment, Socio-Economics and History of Fremont County**

Natural and technological hazards impact citizens, property, the environment and the economy of Fremont County. These hazards expose Fremont County residents, businesses and industries to financial and emotional costs. The risk associated with hazards increases as more people move into areas. This creates a need to develop strategies to reduce risk and loss of lives and property. Identifying risks posed by these hazards, and developing strategies to reduce the impact of a hazard event can assist in protecting life and property of citizens and communities.

#### **Physical / Environment**

##### **Geology**

Much of Fremont County is made up of the 8,500 square mile Wind River Basin. This basin is typical of other large sedimentary and structural basins in the Rocky Mountain West. These basins were formed during the Laramide Orogeny from 135 to 38 million years ago. Broad belts of folded and faulted mountain ranges surround the basin. These ranges include the Wind River Range on the west, the Washakie Range and Owl Creeks and southern Big Horn Mountains on the north, the Casper Arch on the east, and the Granite Mountains on the south. The center of the basin is occupied by relatively un-deformed rocks of more recent age.

Formations of every geologic age exist in Fremont County. These create an environment of enormous geologic complexity and diversity. The geology of Fremont County gives us our topography, mineral resources, many natural hazards and contributes enormously to our cultural heritage.

##### **Topography**

Fremont County is characterized by dramatic elevation changes. Surface elevations range from 13,783 feet above sea level on Gannett Peak, which is the highest point in Wyoming, to 4,800 feet on the Sand Mesa west of Boysen Reservoir. Although there is nearly 9,000 feet separation between the highest and lowest elevations in the county the average elevation is 5,500 feet.

Mountain topography characterizes much of the county and contributes to the spectacular views anywhere in the county. However, the majority of the topography consists of the broad, fairly flat, depositional strata of the central basin and the landforms that wind and water have sculpted upon them.

## **Climate**

The climate of Fremont County is mainly semi-arid. Technically, it is classified as middle-latitude desert. The central part of Fremont County, away from the mountain ranges that ring the basin, are semi-arid. The aridity is produced because of our central location in the North American Continent and the great distance from a source of moisture. The prevailing winds are from the west. Air masses from the Pacific are depleted of moisture by the time they reach Wyoming, which occupies a position in the rain shadow of the Rocky Mountains. The Gulf of Mexico can, under certain conditions, be a source of moisture for Fremont County and Wyoming as a whole. Occasionally, a cyclonic disturbance from the west can “stall out” just east of the Rocky Mountain Front over the High Plains. If the cyclonic depression is large enough much moisture can be back funneled up the mountains and produce prodigious amounts of moisture, usually in the form of snow. This is called an “up slope condition.”

The approximately 9,000 foot difference between the lowest and highest point in Fremont County elevation has a major impact on precipitation and temperature. Many texts on geography and climate simply label mountainous areas as “highland climates: too variable to be rated”. Precipitation varies from 60 inches per year on Gannett Peak to 8 inches per year in the central basin area of the Fremont County around Shoshoni. Most of the habituated area of the county receives between 8 and 14 inches per year.

## **Water**

The semi-arid climate of Fremont County makes water extremely important to Fremont County. Adequate water supplies have affected the historical settlement of the county and will also determine future settlement. Although not enough precipitation falls in the warmer months for adequate natural growth of crops, a tremendous amount of precipitation is accumulated in the mountains in the form of snow. This water reservoir, in the form of snow, is distributed by a system of ditches that allow the water to be issued over the length of the growing season in many parts of the county. Water in this environment of water scarcity is allocated to users in a “first in time, first in right” system.

Surface water supplies about 99 percent (592 million gallons per day in 1990) of the total off-stream use in Fremont County. Irrigation is the largest off-stream use of surface water. The largest use of ground water is for public supply. Total ground-water use in 1990 was 5.9 million gallons per day. (U.S.G.S. Water-Resources Investigations Report 95-1095). Ground water in Fremont County varies greatly in availability and quality. Often, adequate quantity is only available at great depth. However, depth and quantity does not always assure quality.

## **History**

Humans have occupied what is now called Fremont County for over 5,000 years and perhaps longer. Hard archeological evidence is lacking for earlier occupation by humans. However, humans probably traveled through, if not actually stayed here, soon after the last ice age that ended 10,000 to 15,000 years ago.

This vast and beautiful area of land lying between the Owl Creek and Wind River mountains was known by the People (Native American Indians) as the “Warm Valley”. The earliest historic record links the occupation of Fremont County with the Crow and the Shoshone Tribes. In 1854 Chief Washakie of the Shoshones and Big Robber of the Crows met in battle along the Wind River in the vicinity of Crowheart Butte. According to legend the battle between the two tribes was climaxed when Chief Washakie killed Big Robber on top of Crowheart Butte and proudly displayed his heart on the end of his lance. It was the winning of this battle that transferred the historical dominance of the area from the Crow Nation to the Shoshones.

The first white people to enter the area were fur trappers from Canada. A French Canadian by the name of Slear de La Verendrye and his sons came down through northern Wyoming as far as the Wind River. They traded with the Indians and the Indians in turn acted as their guides. Sometime later, French Canadians and Indians formed the Northwest Fur Company which was to become the largest in the world.

President Jefferson in 1803, after the Louisiana Purchase, commissioned Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to find a water route through the new territory. Two people in their party Sacajawea, their Indian guide, and John Colter played later roles in Wyoming’s history. Colter returned to the West after the Lewis and Clark expedition and entered what is now Fremont County over the Northern Owl Creek Mountains, ascended the Wind River and crossed over Union Pass into Jackson Hole. Other trappers and hunters in the area during the early 1800’s included people such as Wilson Hunt, General Ashley, Captain Benjamin Bonneville, Kit Carson and Jim Bridger. Some of these early hunters and trappers, notably Hunt, Ashley and Bonneville were the first to use South Pass as a trail route that became, the Oregon Trail, one of America’s most important emigrant trails.

The history of the fur trade is a fascinating chapter of Fremont County history. Many “rendezvous”, yearly gatherings of trappers, traders, Indians and fur company men, were held in the Wind River Basin. These were the first temporary, mainly white, settlements anywhere in Fremont County. The trappers and traders of the 1820’s and 1830’s pioneered the exploration of Fremont County that would help bring permanent later settlement.

In 1846, General C. Fremont, with the help and knowledge of early trappers and explorers such as John Colter, explored and mapped portions of the area that was later named in his honor. Later in 1859, Col. F. W. Lander was commissioned to survey and layout a road from Burnt Ranch on the Sweetwater to the upper crossing of the Green River thence to Oregon via Bear Lake, Utah. Fremont County’s county seat was later named in honor of Col. Lander.

Gold was known to exist in the area many years before the actual rush of 1867. Emigrants, on their way to California, had discovered gold along Strawberry Creek and the Sweetwater. Soldiers also found small amounts of gold in various locations and the Indians had found gold bearing quartz that they had taken to their trading places. Louis Robinson discovered and brought a considerable amount of gold to Fort Bridger, Utah in 1867. Shortly afterward there was a rush to South Pass. The first major load mine “the Clarissa”, now called the Carissa was located by a group of Salt Lake City men in 1867. Within a very short time there were as many as five thousand people combing the hills and valleys of the area.

The city of South Pass was established in 1867 in what is called the Clarissa Gulch below the Clarissa mine. It was estimated that during South Pass's heyday that there was a resident population of between 1200 and 2000 people. Other mining camp towns created during the gold rush days included Atlantic City and Miners Delight. The last gold mining camp to be created was Lewiston in 1881 sometime after the main gold rush was over. By the early 1870's most of the easy gold had been removed and the area began to lose population with only a few remaining to carry on with hard rock mining. While vast sums of money were never made from the sale of gold, the gold rush greatly accelerated the settlement of the Wind River Valley and the development of its early farms and villages.

South Pass is as equally known for being the birthplace of women's suffrage as it is for its gold production. Ester Hobart Morris, a resident of South Pass City, obtained a pledge from Col. William H. Bright, a member of the Wyoming Territorial Legislature, to introduce and work for the passage of legislation granting suffrage to women. Col. Bright's bill was passed and signed into law by Governor J. A. Campbell on December 10, 1869. Wyoming territory thus became the first government to grant its women the right to vote. Mrs. Morris was then honored in 1870 by being appointed as the world's first woman Justice of the Peace.

### **The Reservation, Forts, and Settlers**

The creation of the Shoshone Indian Reservation, the result of a treaty signed at Fort Bridger, Utah Territory on July 3, 1868 by the U.S. Government, Eastern Shoshone and Bannock tribes was another important event that helped accelerate the settlement of the area. After the boundaries of the reservation were established the government built several forts and camps to keep the peace. The earliest military camps included Camp Auger, built in 1869, where the City of Lander is now located, and Camp Stambaugh near South Pass City in 1870. Camp Auger was renamed Camp Brown in honor of Captain Brown of the Eighteenth Infantry who was killed in the Fort Phil Kearney massacre of 1866. Three years later Camp Brown was moved sixteen miles north of Lander to its present location. In 1879 Camp Brown was renamed Fort Washakie in honor of the great Chief Washakie of the Shoshone tribe.

The Arapaho tribe, now co-occupying the reservation with the Shoshone are known as the "Northern Arapaho". Their placement on the reservation stems from a series of actions and inactions taken by the government after the treaty entered into by the U.S. Government and the Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho in 1876. The Arapaho agreed to take up residence in the Indian Territory on a separate reservation to be created for them. After reaching the north Platte River in eastern Wyoming a portion of the Arapaho decided they would travel no further and they asked that a reservation be established for them along the North Platte. The government, because winter was coming, sought and obtained permission from the Shoshone to place them temporarily on the Shoshone Reservation. Unfortunately, no later action was taken to move the Arapaho. The whole situation dragged along until a new administration in Washington was elected and all promises made by the earlier administration were forgotten. Consequently the Arapahos still reside on the reservation. The government later changed the name of the reservation to the Wind River Indian Reservation and has officially recognized it as being jointly owned by both tribes.

## **Early Towns**

The very earliest towns within the county were the gold mining towns mentioned earlier. Many of the miners however, after the mining played out, moved further north and settled in the “Warm Valley” on the north side of the Wind River Mountains. Some of the earliest settlers had started truck gardening in areas along the Popo Agie (current Lander area) and supplied the mining towns with fresh vegetables. This vegetable growing earned the community to be formed near the Popo Agie the name of “Push Root”. The treaty of 1868 with the Shoshone resulted in the building of Camp Auger located near the location of Fourth and Main Streets in Lander. The same treaty also diminished the Shoshone areas by relinquishing the area between the Sweetwater and the North Fork of the Popo Agie to settlers. In 1882 a town site was platted by B. J. Lowe and Peter Dickenson which encompassed the old Camp Auger site. The new town site was named in honor of Col. F. W. Lander who surveyed land and established the Lander Cut-Off portion of the Oregon Trail.

Moneta, another of the County’s earliest trading spots originated as a Texas cattle drive stop. It was here that the hired hands received and spent a part of their pay. Later when the Wyoming and Northwestern Railroad was built (1906), J. B. Okie, an Englishman, built a sheep shearing barn, holding pens and a store in the area. The town also boasted three houses, a livery stable and a hotel.

## **Fremont County Created**

Fremont County was created by the Wyoming Territorial Legislature in 1884. The history of its creation can be traced from Idaho Territory, through Dakota, Nebraska and finally the Wyoming Territory. Fremont County was cut from a then much larger Sweetwater County which was originally called Carter County. When Fremont County was first established it contained over twelve and one half million acres. Subsequent actions have reduced the overall size of the County to approximately six million acres.

Lander was named as the County Seat and the first Board of County Commissioners met and organized the County on May 6, 1884. It is interesting to note that the very first formal action of the Board of that day was the establishment of the first county road.

## **Riverton Reclamation Project**

In 1904 Goeyne Drummond, after completing a thorough study of a portion of the Reservation between the Owl Creek and Wind River Mountains, found that the study area could be made agriculturally productive through irrigation. In 1906 the Government withdrew that area from the Reservation (ceded portion) and opened it to homesteading. Initially the project was called the Riverton Project and was funded through the Indian Service. Wide spread irrigation did not get underway until 1920 when the project was officially named the Reclamation Project and all funding and development responsibility was transferred to the Bureau of Reclamation.

The Midvale Irrigation District was organized in 1921 and it was through the District that the principal water storage and distribution facilities were constructed. At the present time there are

over 74,000 acres under irrigation within the project. The LeClair and Riverton Valley Irrigation Companies irrigate an additional 20,000 acres outside the project boundaries but within the general Riverton area.

All water used in the project comes from the Wind River and its tributaries above the Wind River Diversion Dam. The estimated annual water runoff at the Diversion Dam is 870,000 acre feet.

## **Later Towns**

When the ceded portion of the Reservation was opened to homesteading, a town site was platted by the government surveyors to provide lots for the coming homesteaders and to create a center of commerce. The town was first called “Wadsworth” in honor of the first station agent who came with the railroad being built from Shoshoni to Lander in 1906. The name Riverton was chosen after a few weeks as the permanent name for the town built in response to the boom brought about by the irrigation project. Riverton is now the largest city in the county.

Shoshoni is another town which came into being because of the development of the Riverton Reclamation Project. With the announcement that the government was going to open a portion of the Reservation to homesteading, the Pioneer Townsite Company platted and laid out the border town of Shoshoni. The official opening of the date of the new town was September 1905, nearly one year before the opening of the ceded portion of the Reservation. It is reported that the town became an instant tent city with over two thousand residents prior to the opening of the Reservation.

## **Railroads and Timber**

The coming of the railroad in 1906 stimulated the local economy and provided further impetus to the overall development of the area. At least one town, Hudson, owes its origin to the building of the railroad. Hudson began as a railroad depot at the confluence of the Big and Little Popo Agie Rivers. Subsequent growth of the town was stimulated by the development of a coal mining operation. Hudson’s peak population numbered approximately 1500 persons. Later reductions in the demand for coal, caused by the advent of the diesel locomotive, coupled with operational problems at the two mines caused the town’s population to dwindle.

The railroad was originally built by the Wyoming and Northwestern Railroad Company from the east connecting the towns of Moneta, Bonneville, Shoshoni, Riverton, Hudson and Lander. The majority of the track has since been taken over by the Burlington Northern which ran a north-south line from points north through the Wind River Canyon connecting with the Wyoming-Northwestern near Bonneville. These railroads served as major transportation arteries for a number of years. The railroad discontinued its service between Riverton and Lander in the late 1960’s. Rail service from Riverton to Shoshoni was discontinued in the late 1980’s.

The timber industry, the principal economic stimulus to the growth of Dubois, was begun in 1905 by Jim Seward who had been logging the Sheridan area. The main products of the industry were timber and ties. The ties were used in the construction of the railroad. The ties were hand

hewn by a group of rugged lumberjacks called “tie-hacks”. The first tie drive downstream to Riverton took place in 1915 and such tie drives were commonplace until 1946. Between 1946 and the late 1980’s all timber was processed in Dubois.

## **Mining**

The search for and use of mineral deposits in the earth has long been an activity of Fremont County residents. The first mining in Fremont County was conducted by Indians looking for flint deposits in order to fashion projectile points, knives and other cutting/piercing implements. The upper rim of Sinks Canyon near Lander bears the imprint of some of these early miners in the form of several prehistoric pits where flint was extracted and worked. Steatite (soapstone) was also mined by Paleo-Indians for use in making pots.

Mining gained commercial importance in the county with the gold rush at South Pass in 1868. Since that time, gold, coal, magnetite, feldspar and uranium have been mined commercially in Fremont County.

The gold rush in South Pass lasted until the late 1870’s. Since then, gold has not been of commercial importance - although small amounts of gold have been recovered by individuals “panning” in the streams of the area. Periodic interest prevails in reopening one or more of the old mines.

Coal production was important in Hudson between 1907 and 1940. Two large mines and several smaller ones produced coal for the railroad and other uses until the 1940’s when natural gas started to replace coal for heating purposes.

In more recent times, the discovery of uranium south of Riverton in 1953 launched Fremont County into the uranium industry. The importance of uranium mining grew to a peak in the early 1980’s and has since declined due to reduced emphasis on nuclear power and lower priced uranium from foreign sources.

Copper deposits are known to exist in Fremont County north of Shoshoni, however, no commercial extraction has occurred to date. Feldspar was mined in the Owl Creek Mountains north of Shoshoni between 1970 and 1979.

Jade, a semi-precious gemstone has been used since pre-historic times in the manufacture of weapons, utensils, ornaments, bells and jewelry. Several claims southeast of Lander supply jade for use in jewelry.

The first producing oil well west of Pennsylvania was drilled near Lander in 1884. Prior to that, naturally occurring oil springs and tar seeps were used by Indians for medicinal purposes and by early settlers for wagon lubrication.

Iron ore (Magnetite) was mined at Atlantic City by U.S. Steel from 1962 to 1984. This large commercial mining operation had a great impact on Fremont County and Lander in particular.

When U.S. Steel closed the mine and milling operations in 1984, Lander suffered a significant loss of population and as a result, lost revenue in the form of taxes and wages.

The new prospecting interest in recent years has been for diamonds. Exploration companies and consultants working in Wyoming have led to some interesting new discoveries and information regarding the potential for diamond occurrences in Wyoming. Although the two most significant areas are the Colorado-Wyoming State line district south of Laramie and the Green River Basin of southwestern Wyoming, new information about possible occurrences in the Bighorn and Owl Creek Mountains and in central Wyoming have raised interest in those areas.

The importance of the geology of Wyoming in relation to public lands as a source of minerals and gemstones cannot be overemphasized both as a local and national economic resource. However, one economically overlooked national asset of public lands is their educational value for study of the discipline and praxis of geology and the mineral industry. Fremont County is the location of two university geology field camps. Other colleges and universities frequently make scheduled stops in Fremont County during field trips. Fremont County schools and Central Wyoming College make use of public lands as an outdoor classroom as well.

### **Modern Prospectors**

The oil industry has been a part of the Wyoming economy since the beginning days of statehood. In fact, explorers in what is now Wyoming in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century reported evidence of oil. **Capt. B. L. E. Bonneville**'s Adventures include reference to oil springs near present **Dallas Dome**, the location of what would be the state's first drilled oil well in 1885.

During the fur trade and Overland trails periods, mountain men commented on "oil springs" where oil bubbled to the surface of water pools. Native people seined off the oil for eons, using the greasy residues for war-paint, decoration on hides and teepees, as horse and human liniments, and for medications. An oil spring near Hilliard was well-known when Fort Bridger was established in 1842. The first recorded oil sale in Wyoming, however, happened along the Oregon Trail when, in 1863, enterprising entrepreneurs sold oil as a lubricant to wagon train travelers. The oil came from Oil Mountain Springs, some 20 miles west of present-day Casper.

Nationally, oil had a similar history. Thirteen years after the world's first oil well was drilled in Baku, Azerbaijan, America's first gusher, was struck. Made by "Colonel" Edwin Drake, America's initial discovery was at Titusville, Penn., in 1859. It led to an oil rush to western Pennsylvania. Initially, even the newly "drilled" oil had only nominal use in transportation—as axle grease for wagons and coaches or lubricant for steam engines powered by wood or coal.

*Source: Phil Roberts, A New History of Wyoming*

The first oil discovered in Wyoming was found drilling the Murphy No. 1 in 1883 in the Dallas Oil Field approximately eight miles southeast of Lander. Since then numerous oil and gas wells have been brought into production. The oil fields lie mainly along a northwest-southeast axis running roughly parallel to the Wind River Mountains passing through the center of the county. The natural gas fields are mainly found within the northeastern part of the county.

The early 1950's brought another kind of prospector to Fremont County. This time the object of the search was uranium. Major uranium fields were first discovered in 1953 in both Gas Hills and Crooks Gap areas of the county. In the late 1970's and early 80's over two thousand people were employed within the county in the mining and milling of uranium.

Iron ore was also discovered within the area in the 1950's. The Columbia-Geneva Steel Division of the United States Steel Corporation began taconite mining and milling operations in 1962. Until 1982 over 500 people were employed by U.S. Steel. Between 1982 and 1985 the taconite mine saw several periods of declining activity followed by renewed vigor. By 1985 the mine was closed permanently.

## **Wyoming Agriculture 2009**

The value of the agricultural sector output in Wyoming annually approaches or exceeds one billion dollars. Cash receipts have exceeded that threshold in 4 of the last 9 years. In 2009, 11,000 farms and ranches were operating in Wyoming with a total land area of 30.2 million acres. Wyoming ranks 11th nationally in total land in farms and ranches and 1st in average size of farms and ranches. The cattle industry is by far the largest component of Wyoming agriculture accounting for 64 percent of all cash receipts in 2009. Cattle also led the way in 2009 in terms of value of production at \$400 million. All livestock production was valued at \$501.6 million, down 14 percent from 2008.

Hay is by far the leading crop in Wyoming in terms of value of production totaling \$271 million in 2009, but most is fed to livestock. Barley had the next highest crop value followed by sugar beets, wheat and dry beans. Fremont County harvested 58,000 acres of hay with a yield of 4.3 tons per acre bringing production totals to 249,000 tons of hay produced. In comparison with Wyoming's other 22 counties, Fremont County ranks first in all hay production

*Source: Wyoming 2010 Agricultural Statistics  
compiled by USDA NASS, Wyoming Field Office*

## **Fremont County Agriculture**

The cultivation of crops first appeared in Fremont County by early semi-nomadic Indian Tribes. Later, vegetables were grown near Lander to sell to the miners at South Pass.

Agriculture continues to be a very important part of Fremont County's economic and cultural heritage. As of the 2010 Census of Agriculture, Fremont County had 1,394 farms. Fremont County has 2,509,897 acres in agriculture with an agriculture value of \$ 73.9 million dollars. Fremont County is ranked third in total value of livestock and crops. Based on assessed valuation, the amount of land in agricultural use has remained relatively constant in Fremont County over time.

Fremont County also ranks third in all Wyoming counties in cattle numbers, fourth in sugar beet, fourth in oat and fifth in barley production. Ranching, like crop cultivation, came to Fremont County very early in its history. William Boyd brought in the first stock of cattle in 1869 and William Tweed was the first to introduce sheep raising in 1870.

Today two-thirds of Fremont County contributes significantly to the State of Wyoming's national ranking in agriculture. Wyoming ranks second in the nation in average size of farms, ranches, wool production and number of breeding sheep. Wyoming ranks third in the nation in number of all sheep and lambs.

*Source: <http://fremontcountywy.org/uwextension/agriculture/>*

Fremont County has the largest number of irrigated acres of any county in Wyoming. Irrigation is the key factor in agriculture production in Fremont County. Primary irrigation districts in Fremont County are Midvale Irrigation District, LeClair, Wind River Reservation (BIA Systems) and Riverton Valley. The acres under irrigation in county are 185,000 in the districts.

Annual precipitation amounts recorded in 2009 in Riverton were 11.59 inches of moisture. This was 3.39 inches above normal.

*Source: Climatologically Data, U.W. Department of Commerce, NOAA.*

## **Tourism- Wyoming & Fremont County**

Visitors traveling to and throughout Wyoming represent an important component of the state's economy. Travel originating in domestic and international markets generates valuable business sales, payroll, employment and tax receipts for the state as well as for local jurisdictions. Further, many locations within Wyoming serve as travel destinations in their own right, for both Wyoming residents and out-of-state visitors. These areas accordingly consider travel and tourism a primary industry.

### **DIRECT IMPACTS**

The estimates of the direct impacts associated with traveler spending in Wyoming were produced using the Regional Travel Impact Model (RTIM) developed by Dean Runyan Associates. The input data used to detail the economic impacts of the Wyoming travel industry were gathered from various local, state and federal sources. Travel impacts consist of estimates of travel spending and the employment, earnings, and state and local taxes generated by this spending.

This section provides detailed county estimates, as well as a number of summary tables, for the years 1997 to 2009p. In interpreting these estimates, readers are advised that: • All monetary values are expressed in current dollars (no inflation adjustment). The estimates measure direct impacts only. Secondary impacts are reported at the state level for employment and earnings. In general, estimates of counties with small populations and economies are less reliable than estimates for more populous and economically diverse areas. Trend analysis and comparisons of counties with relatively low levels of travel related economic activity should therefore be interpreted cautiously.

Wyoming travel impacts by county (2009 preseason projection) total earnings including wages and salary disbursements for the state was \$2,466.6 million. Fremont County showed travel spending including total direct spending as \$188.7 million. This is an increase over the 1997 season of \$ 65.9 million in Fremont County.

A substantial portion of the Fremont County economy is related to tourism. Snowmobiling is a primary contributor to that economy in the western half of the County, supporting at least six lodges and much of the winter economy of the town of Dubois. The Lander office of the U.S. Forest Service reports an estimate of around 10,000 snowmobile crossings of traffic counters on the Continental Divide snowmobile Trail near Dubois per winter, and around 7,500 crossings per year on the Loop Road above Lander. These numbers do not include the number of snowmobiles using Fremont County's snowmobiling areas where traffic counters have not been installed. Recreational boating on Boysen, Bull Lake, Pilot Butte reservoirs, and other water bodies also contributes significantly to the tourism economy of the County. The use of four-wheelers and other off road vehicles is also recognized as a significant contributor to this sector of the economy as well, as are the drive-through activities of tourists headed for Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.

*Source: The Economic Impact of Travel in Wyoming, May 2010, Dean Runyan Associates*

## **Lands**

Land, and control of that land, is important to the people of Fremont County. Our cultural heritage is based on either the ownership or control of land.

Public (Federal and State)	58.2 %
Reservation (Land held by trust for the Tribes)	26.89 %
Private	14.91 %

*Source: Fremont County Assessor, February 24, 2004*

It is obvious that with almost 60 percent of the land area in Fremont County in public ownership that public policy set by the U.S. Congress and carried out by those agencies that manage lands can pose monumental impacts on local governments and economics.

In Fremont County, including the Wind River Indian Reservation, eighty seven percent (87 %) of the land is impacted by federal or state land management policies.

## **Grazing**

Grazing has been important in the Fremont County area for fifty thousand (50,000) years. Prior to the establishment of commercial cattle operations in the mid 1800's, wild game and buffalo, the sustainer of the Indian culture, grazed in the semi-arid lands of the area. The grazing of ungulates is not a modern invention of White culture. Both historically and recently the Indian and White cultures have relied on the grazing lands of Fremont County to provide food, clothing, utensils, recreation and sources of income.

The semi-arid climate and topography on both rangeland and forest provide excellent areas for the grazing of livestock. The continued viability of the livestock industry is vital in maintaining Fremont County's economy and government, as well as preserving the culture and heritage of the Indian and Euro-American inhabitants. In 1997, the Bureau of Land Management authorized a total of 285,221 animal unit months (AUM) in Fremont County.

### **Population Growth**

The population in Fremont County has continued to increase following the "bust" in the mining industry that took place in the 80's. The population of Fremont County was 38,992 in 1980. The fall within the mining and oil exploration in the 80's brought the census count to 33,662 in 1990. Beginning in 2000, the population increased to 35,804. 2009 U.S. Census Bureau figures maintains the population has increased to 38,719.

### **Building Trends in Fremont County**

The saying in Fremont County is that "we are getting the millionaires that the billionaires are running out of the Jackson Hole area." The largest incoming populations are those looking for a retirement "summer home" in the mountains or just a second home to enjoy the outdoors. The communities of Riverton, Lander and Dubois continue to expand. Development, across the county, is not uniform. It is organized in some areas and random in others. Limited or minimal codes do not allow control over what is developing in the urban and rural areas of the county.

The continued increase in population stretches the volunteer emergency services that serve Fremont County. Fremont county is just under 10,000 square miles (larger than the State of Vermont, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Delaware, Rhode Island and the District of Columbia). Newcomers expect the same services (i.e. fire, ambulance, law enforcement and waste removal) in the same short amount of time as where they previously resided (usually much larger communities.) There is the expectation of immediate response without consideration of the size of the county as a whole, especially in the rural areas.