

SUSTAINING WILDLIFE POPULATIONS IN THE MADISON VALLEY, MONTANA, IN THE FACE OF SUBDIVISION DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN POPULATION GROWTH

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A Madison Valley Wildlife Overlay district was developed for the Madison Valley to help ensure that new development in the Valley protects the wildlife resource by identifying areas critical for wildlife and developing guidelines and requirements for development within these areas. This is a needed planning tool throughout the Intermountain West. In most counties wildlife habitat is given little consideration and is usually input into the planning process after many crucial decisions have already been made. Little consideration is given how development will impact neighboring properties or fit into a larger planning area. The Overlay district is based upon *A Wildlife Conservation Assessment of the Madison Valley, Montana* by the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Craighead Environmental Research Institute, and the Madison Valley Ranchlands Group. The assessment was based on analysis of 15 focal species. Priority areas derived from the Assessment were divided into four categories: Wildlife diversity habitat areas, Wildlife habitat connectivity areas, Riparian willow/cottonwood habitat areas, and Riparian corridors. The first phase of the project identified and mapped the most critical areas in the valley for wildlife habitat. General consensus was reached with area biologists and results were discussed and refined with other stakeholders. The second phase will develop specific guidelines for proposed development within the conservation overlay for various habitat quality ‘zones’ that maintain wildlife value of the area. A final proposal, maps, and development guidelines will then be presented to the County Commissioners for approval.