

# SHERIDAN COUNTY



2014

## Comprehensive Plan

## Executive Summary

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## Principles

These guiding principles form the base for how the vision of Sheridan County will be carried out and implemented.

- Foremost the Sheridan County Planning Commission recognizes the importance of individual freedom and the right to hold property.
- The residents of Sheridan County also value and respect the land, air, and water of the county and wish to encourage sound stewardship of these resources to ensure following generations will have the same access to this legacy.
- Preserve the existing land uses, heritage and character of the County. This plan will focus on regulating land use change, not agriculture.
- Avoid the mixing of incompatible land uses through well defined land use patterns.
- Encourage development patterns which make maximum use of existing utilities and services.
- Engage in collaborative and mutually beneficial development and policies between the communities and agricultural areas of the county.
- Strengthen and enhance the character of individual communities through proper land use controls and redevelopment tools.
- Protect and enhance the tax base through proper land use controls and investigating revenue alternatives.
- Utilize outside agencies as technical bodies for review of permit applications. These bodies will not be decision making, or asked to render a particular opinion— rather they should be used as data resources for planning.
- Limit future developments and projects to locations that are relatively free from environmental constraints relating to: soil; slope; depth to groundwater; drainage; threatened, endangered, or sensitive species, historical sites, erosion hazards, wetlands, ponds, marshes, and the unspoiled and unaltered scenic qualities of the landscape.

## Goals and Strategies

### Economy

The economy of Sheridan County has and will continue to have its roots in agriculture. Economic goals and strategies should work to preserve the viability of agriculture while ensuring predictability for incoming industries. In the communities, entrepreneurship is the path to maintaining locally owned businesses. Economic strategies for the county also put emphasis on things that can help new farmers, ranchers, or business owners successfully start and run their business in Sheridan County. Integrating education and innovation into agriculture helps to maintain the viability of present and future agricultural operations in the county and can start getting young people ‘rooted’ in the county.

- 1) Grow entrepreneurship among current residents and those wishing to move back to the area.
  - A. Create a ‘package’ of local and regional resources for new businesses and entrepreneurs.
  - B. Increase accessibility to sources of capital in the region for small businesses and entrepreneurs including gap financing and seed money.
  - C. Grow social entrepreneurship for sustainable social services in the region.
  - D. Increase opportunities and networks for entrepreneurship education through traditional and non-traditional education settings.
- 2) Pursue agricultural innovation opportunities through strengthened partnerships.
  - A. Partner with local schools to help connect the next generation of Sheridan County residents with current farmers, ranchers, educators, and business persons.
  - B. Partner with higher education institutions to encourage innovation, connect students to private employers, and connect local agricultural businesses with new available technology.
- 3) Support health care, public health, and local service providers that help families become healthier and more financially stable.
- 4) Develop changes to land use through adequate public input, view-shed considerations, an understanding of potential long term environmental impacts, and ensure development does not have unreasonable adverse effects on neighboring agricultural uses and inhabitants.
- 5) Promote tourism and recreation opportunities.
  - A. Maintain and ensure adequate funding of a tourism website for the county which cross references the communities and neighboring counties.
  - B. Promote and market the Bridges to Buttes Scenic Highway and Crazy Horse Memorial Highway and link together a ‘package’ of sites across the corridor.

## Land Use and Land Use Changes

One of the overarching policies of this plan is to turn attention to regulating changes in land use, not the agricultural land uses that currently exist. This policy stems from the general desire in the county to maintain the unique quality and style of life as it is. Two of the most critical tenants of regulating change in land use is protecting the sensitive ecosystems of the Sandhills on which the prosperity of ranching depends, and protecting water resources which are crucial for everybody but especially critical for irrigated crop operations. Also addressed in this section are incompatible land uses, where the use of one parcel adversely affects the use and character of a neighboring land use.

- 1) Work collaboratively with land owners, the Upper Niobrara White Natural Resource District (UNWNRD), UNL-extension, and other interested agencies to educate new and longtime rural residents about how to be good neighbors and good stewards of the land and water.
- 2) Protect against erosion and ecosystem destruction.
  - A. A runoff and erosion control plan should be implemented in developments which is to show how erosion threats will be stabilized and minimized and how land disturbance will be minimized and how it could affect the surrounding environment.
  - B. Encourage and promote education and voluntary conservation measures facilitated by the Upper Niobrara White NRD including the Panhandle No-Till Partnership.
  - C. Encourage voluntary participation in programs facilitated by the Sandhills Taskforce to protect wetlands and surface water.
- 3) Protect groundwater resources to extend future life of the aquifer and ensure a particular use or activity does not adversely affect access to water for other rural and municipal residents.
  - A. Work with Upper Niobrara White NRD to protect ground water resources, ensuring development and activities are consistent with the Groundwater Management Plan and the Integrated Management Plan. See map on page 10 for management rules and regulations for Sheridan County sub-areas.
  - B. Development will be reviewed by the Upper Niobrara White NRD and the planning commission to ensure development will not adversely affect water levels or quality in wetlands, lakes or existing wells. New modeling technology with the state Department of Natural Resources and the Upper Niobrara White NRD should be used for future decision making.
  - C. Cooperate with municipalities and other public water suppliers to consider and incorporate agreed upon wellhead protection measures.
  - D. Permitting for development that could potentially contaminate groundwater should show that water levels or quality in wells or surface water is not adversely impacted.
  - E. Best practices for groundwater recharge and protection should be pursued by land owners, special districts, and industry with intensive water usage.
  - F. Sustainable practices for water usage should be pursued due to climate variability and potentially more scarce supplies of water in the future.

- 4) Avoid incompatible neighboring land uses.
  - A. Enforce compatibility of land uses in regards to activity level, bulk, setbacks, and potential for nuisances.
  - B. New and expanding intensive feedlots will be permitted on a conditional basis in relation to existing residential development and will be evaluated with the same potential nuisance and activity level measures that are mentioned above.
- 5) Rural residential development should comply with minimum lot sizes and character of the surrounding rural area and be focused primarily in cooperation with agricultural uses in the transitional agricultural zone surrounding municipalities.
- 6) Nuisance regulations should not interfere with routine farm and ranch operations, though any county which adopts zoning can provide rules for the prevention, abatement, and removal of nuisances. Unsightly and potentially hazardous uses such as salvage yards should be directed away from view from highways, churches, schools, and residences.

## Housing

With an historically and currently declining population, new housing units are not projected to be needed in the county. Newly built houses will likely cost more to build than they will be worth after construction which further complicates the issue. For these reasons an emphasis on quality and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock is recommended. Partnerships with other counties, development districts, and developers can help make a rehabilitation effort viable.

- 1) Pursue partnerships with economic development districts, other jurisdictions, and other developers to undertake housing rehabilitation.
- 2) Apply development permitting processes outlined in the Land Use section to rural residential developments.
- 3) Should new housing development occur, it should be encouraged in the transitional agricultural zone around municipalities.

## Transportation

Transportation activity should continue to prioritize high traffic areas and serve the special uses such as roads to market, schools, churches, and cemeteries. The development, review, and utilization of the 1 and 6 year plan is necessary for equitable and efficient use of resources and labor. Bridges should be regularly checked and scheduled for maintenance based on objective and measurable criteria. Staffing strategies may have to be undertaken to ensure the roads departments personnel needs will be met in the future.

- 1) Continue to upgrade new equipment and vehicles on a scheduled and rotating basis.
- 2) Prioritize high traffic roads which connect to major arterials.
- 3) Monitor roads which are prone to erosion along creeks, wetlands, and streams.
- 4) Explore transportation cooperatives and expanded Handibus hours and availability to serve aging generations and low mobility residents and neighbors. Transportation in partnership or relation to the Pine Ridge Reservation potentially has economic opportunity and would also help fill a need for more people.
- 5) Establish and maintain protective measures for commercial wind and tower development in regards to maintenance of the roads used during construction and development.
- 6) Support measures and legislation that maintains viability of municipal airports in the county and in Chadron.
- 7) Establish a 'talent pipeline' strategy for future personnel needs of the roads department.

## Public Facilities

The main concerns in public facilities in the county were in municipality jurisdiction and the jail. Capacity issues could be and could become an issue in the future with the average occupancy nearing capacity and measures for transporting detainees being costly. Strong support for the volunteer fire departments exist in the county and many are pleased with their services. Gordon Memorial Hospital and the Hay Springs and Rushville Clinics both offer extremely important local services for citizens who would otherwise have to travel miles for health care. One final aspect that cannot be overlooked is the county's collective web presence which is not only important for public information, tourism, and informing visitors but is also important for government transparency and efficacy.

- 1) Plan for updates and increased capacity at the county jail.
- 2) Provide funding and labor needed to keep an up to date website for county government.
- 3) Continue to ensure efficiency of volunteer fire departments and local law enforcement and stay ahead of new equipment and vehicle needs through a capital improvement plan.
- 4) Continue to make access and awareness of public land and recreational opportunities easy for the public.
- 5) Help to facilitate and support the development of bicycle friendly communities and connections through land use policies and help in navigating necessary documents.
- 6) Ensure that a plan is established with developers of the cowboy trail for adequate accessory needs such as waste receptacles, signage, and maintenance once the cowboy trail moves forward. Prioritize the link to Dawes County before the link to Cherry county to glean recreational users and opportunities.

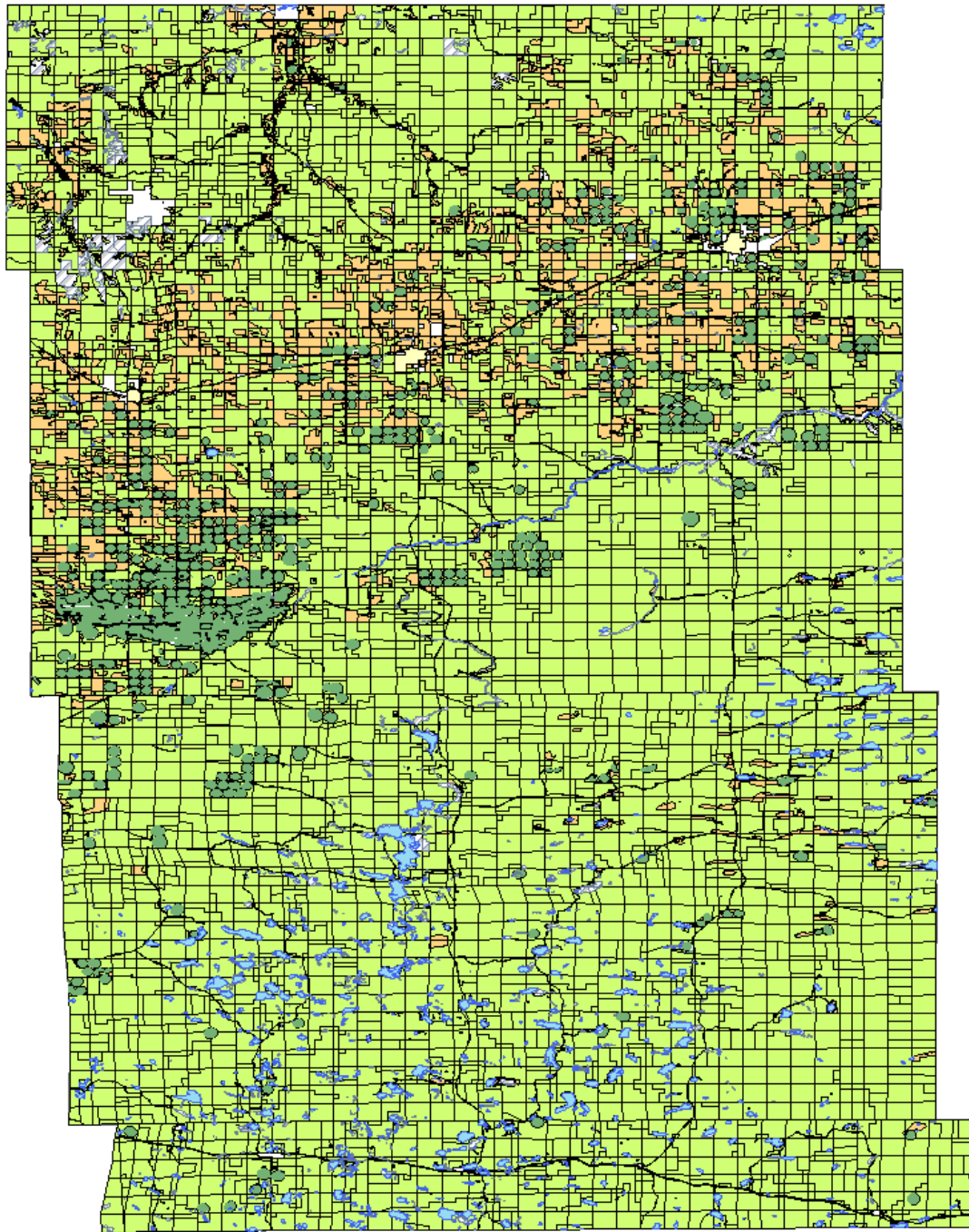
## Energy

Energy both in fossil fuels and renewables is a booming commodity in some of the neighboring states and regions to Sheridan County. Sheridan County stands to gain much from the economic opportunities these commodities present but it must be diligent in protecting itself from unwanted nuisance aspects that can come along with the development of energy— most eminently, wind energy development. Within county government energy consumption, energy efficient measures such as insulation and alternative lighting options could be implemented to save the county energy use and potentially money.

- 1) Incorporate energy saving tips for increased energy efficiency of electricity , vehicles, and structural insulation.
- 2) Maintain a set of regulations for commercial wind development which would address unwanted sight and sound, setbacks, and environmental sensitivity among other things.
- 3) Direct commercial energy development away from the environmentally sensitive, biologically and scenically unique Sandhills areas.
- 4) Facilitate in code the ability for rural land owners to effectively use onsite renewable energy production provided other zoning and set back regulations are met.



# Sheridan County Land Type



October 2014

### Legend

Lakes and Area Water

### USE

Commercial

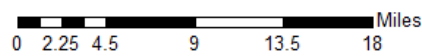
Dryland Crop

Grassland

Irrigated Crop

Road

Badland/Waste

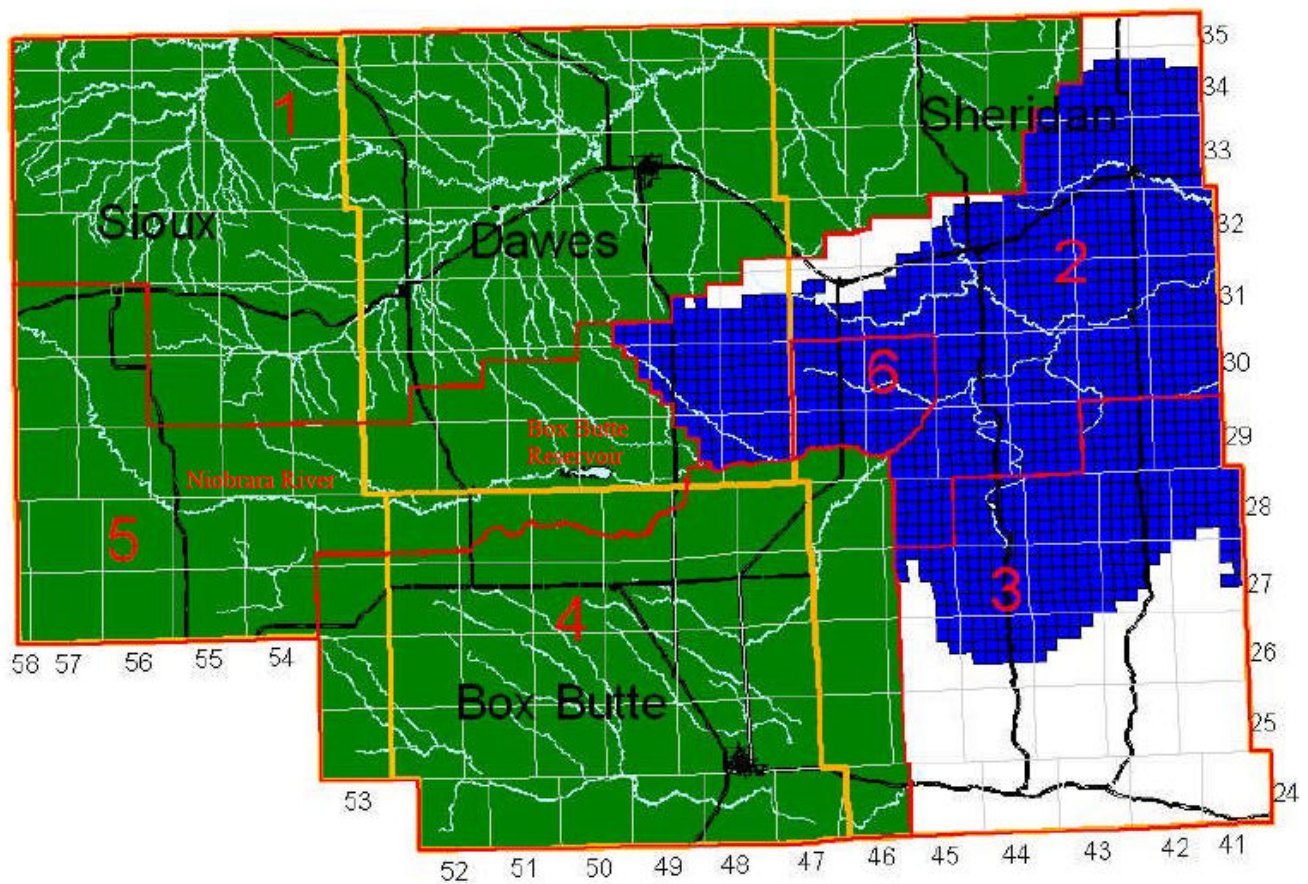


Map data and shapefiles by:  
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## Upper Niobrara White Natural Resource District with Sub areas

**Map 1.** Dark Green Shaded Area Designated as Fully Appropriated November 3, 2004  
Blue Shaded Area Designated as Fully Appropriated January 25, 2008  
Red Lines Delineate Sub-area Management Boundaries

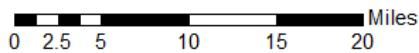
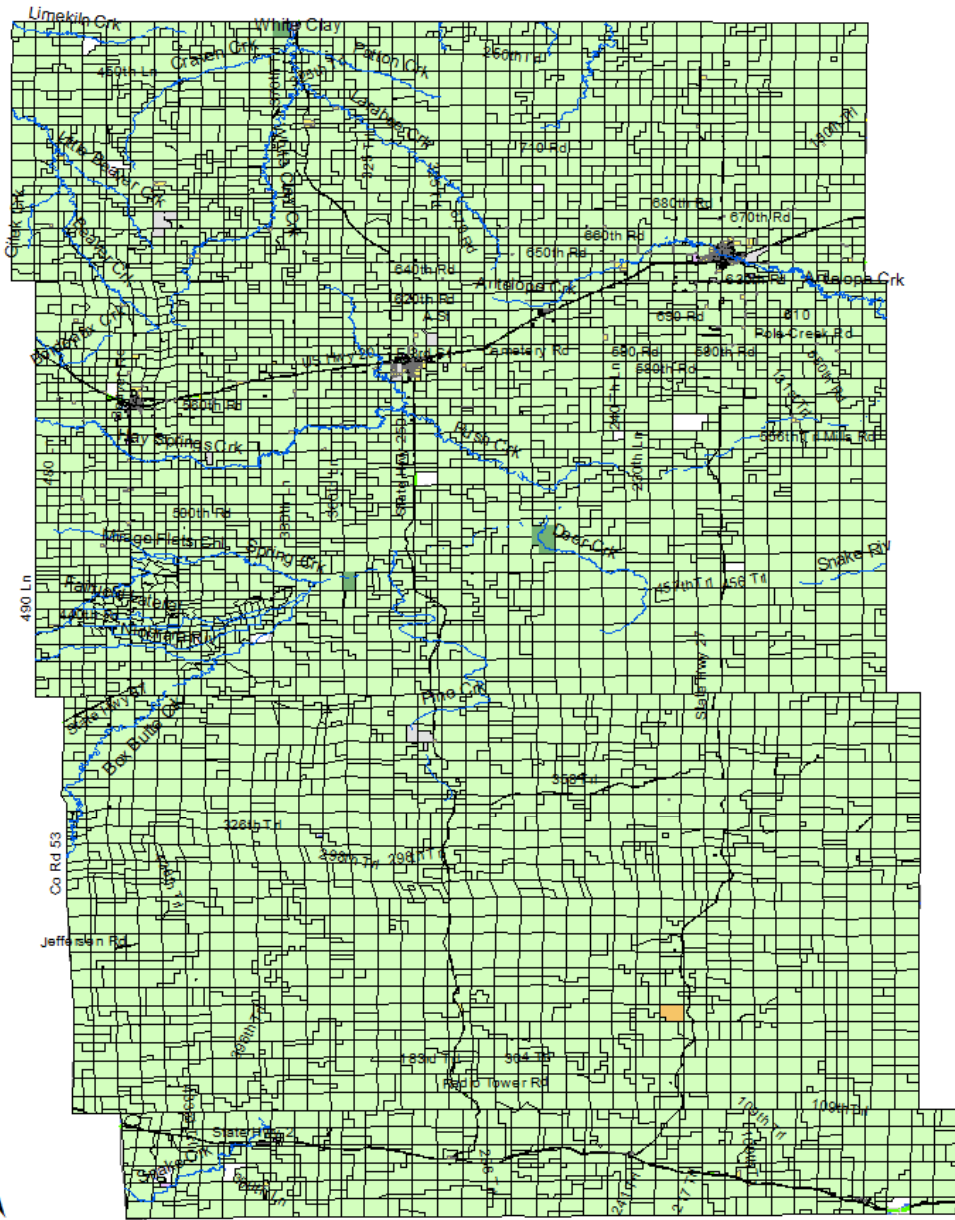


Map provided by UNWNRD; Integrated Water Management Plan

### Triggered regulations by sub area in Sheridan County:

- **Entire UNWNRD:** Moratorium on new high capacity wells– those that are able to either alone or in combination pump 50 gallons or more a minute.
- **Sub Area 2:** Phase II of groundwater management rules. No new irrigated acres allowed.
- **Sub Areas 4 and 6:** Phase III of groundwater management rules. No new wells and no new irrigated acres. Groundwater allocations in place: 65 inches per acre from 2015-2019.

# Sheridan County Current Land Use



October 2014

### Legend

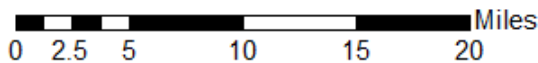
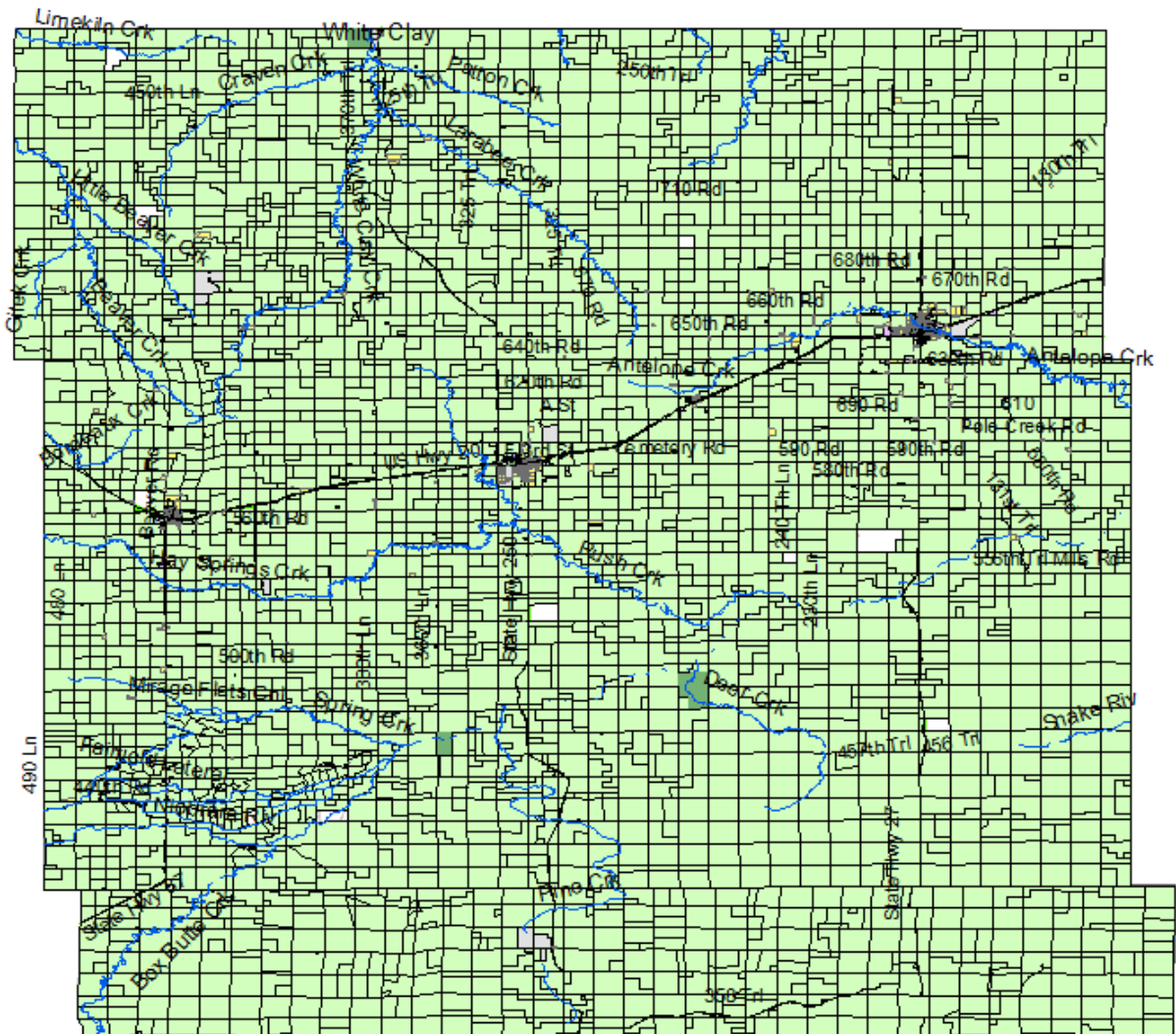
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|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Major Streams and Rivers  | Lakes and Area Water        |
| <b>Current Land Use</b>   | <b>Roads Classification</b> |
| Single Family Residential | Local                       |
| Multi-family Residential  | Major Arterial              |
| Commercial                | Other Arterial              |
| Agricultural              | Collector                   |
| Recreational              | Minimum Maintenance         |
| Other                     |                             |

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# Sheridan County Current Land Use- North



October 2014

## Legend

— Major Streams and Rivers      Lakes and Area Water

### Current Land Use

- Single Family Residential
- Multi-family Residential
- Commercial
- Agricultural
- Recreational
- Other

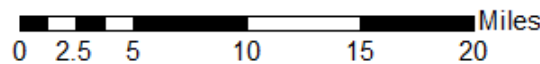
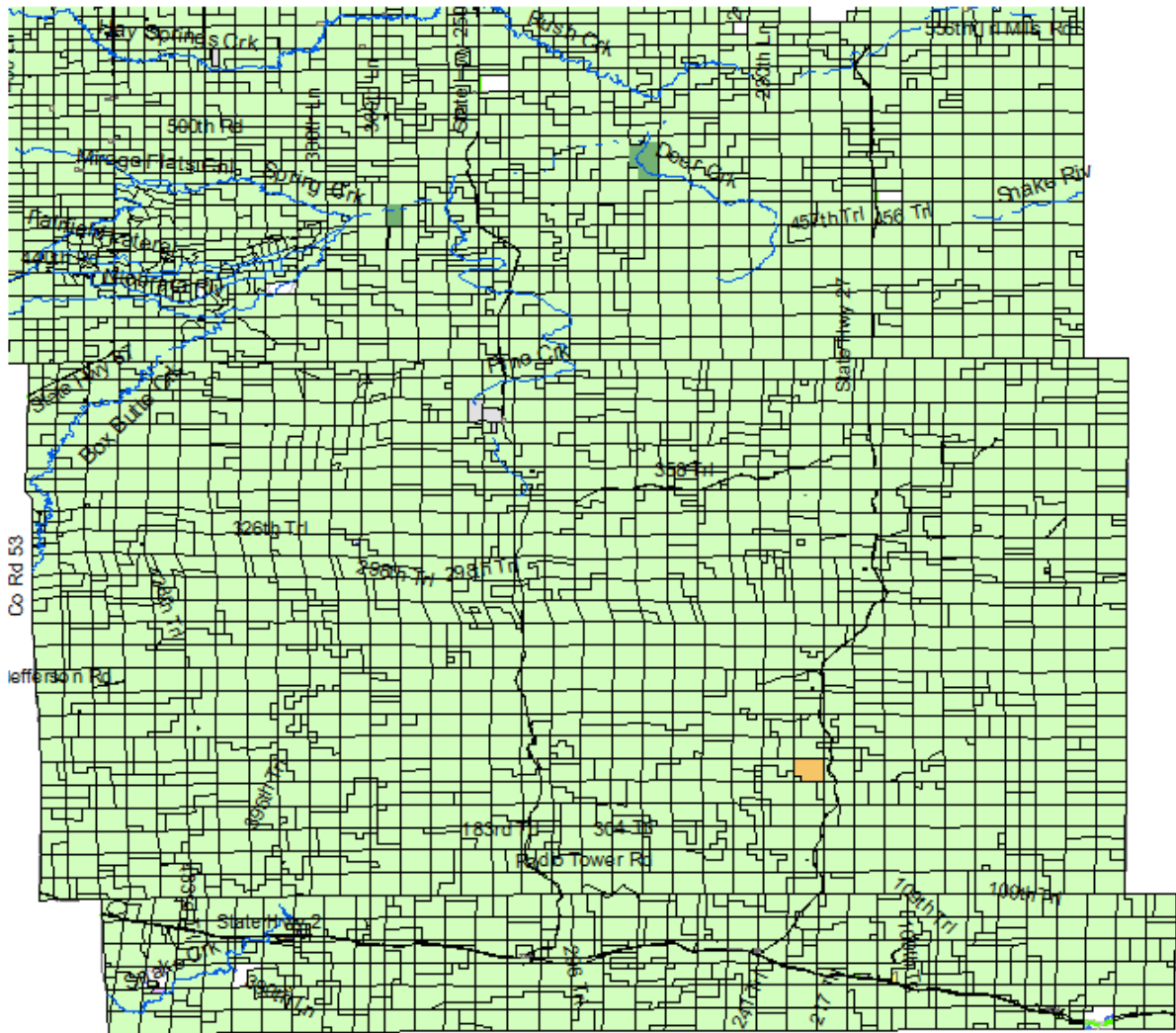
### Roads Classification

- Local
- Major Arterial
- Other Arterial
- Collector
- Minimum Maintenance

Home shapefiles courtesy of:  
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# Sheridan County Current Land Use- South



October 2014

## Legend

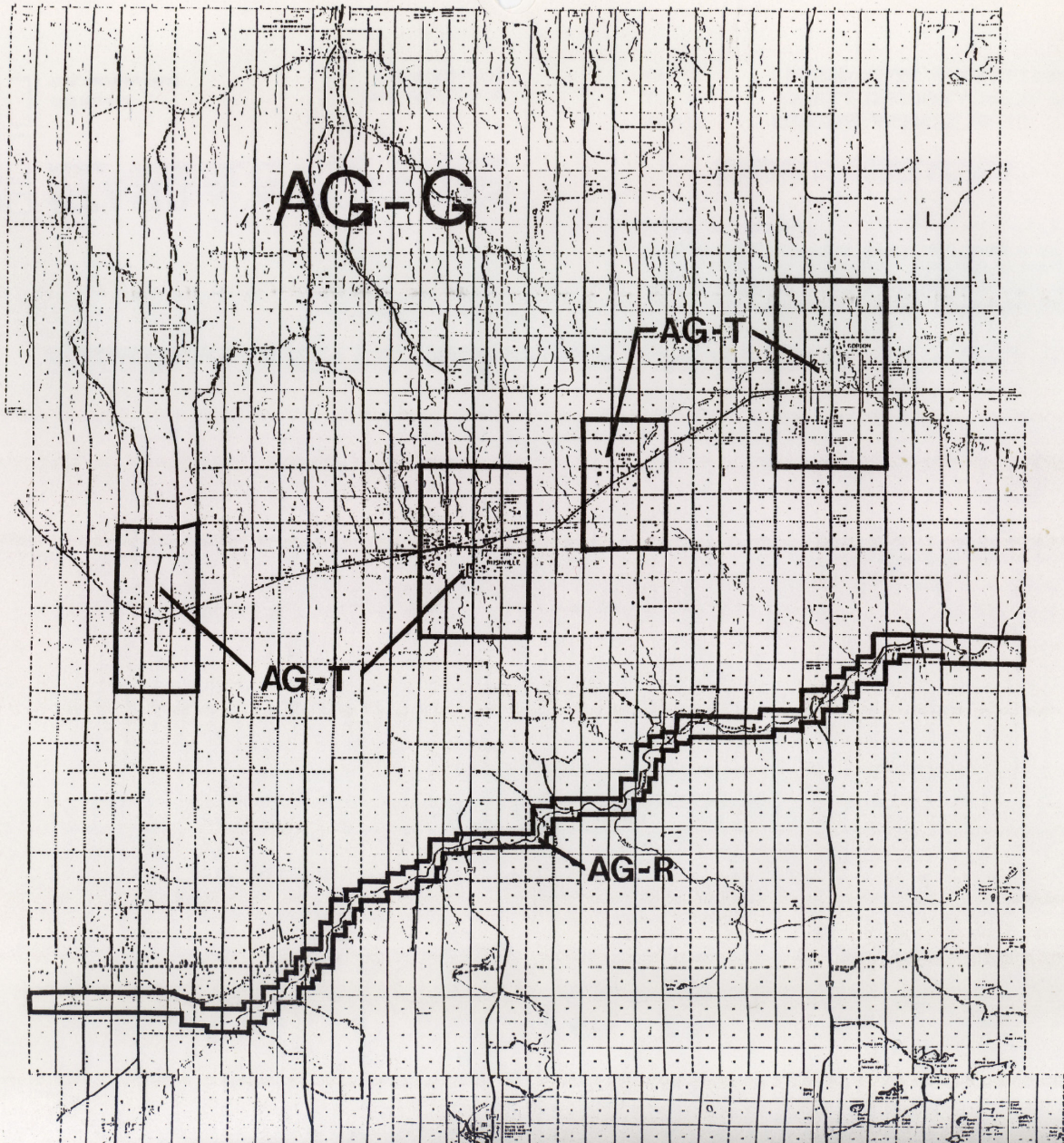
- |                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Major Streams and Rivers  | Lakes and Area Water        |
| <b>Current Land Use</b>   | <b>Roads Classification</b> |
| Single Family Residential | Local                       |
| Multi-family Residential  | Major Arterial              |
| Commercial                | Other Arterial              |
| Agricultural              | Collector                   |
| Recreational              | Minimum Maintenance         |
| Other                     |                             |

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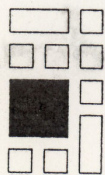


Sheridan County Unofficial Zoning/Landuse Map- North



**SHERIDAN COUNTY, NEBRASKA UNOFFICIAL ZONING MAP**

This is an unofficial copy of the OFFICIAL ZONING MAP for Sheridan County, Nebraska and this map may not accurately reflect the zoning districts now applicable in the County. Please verify all zoning district boundaries with the OFFICIAL ZONING MAP located in the office of the Sheridan County Clerk.



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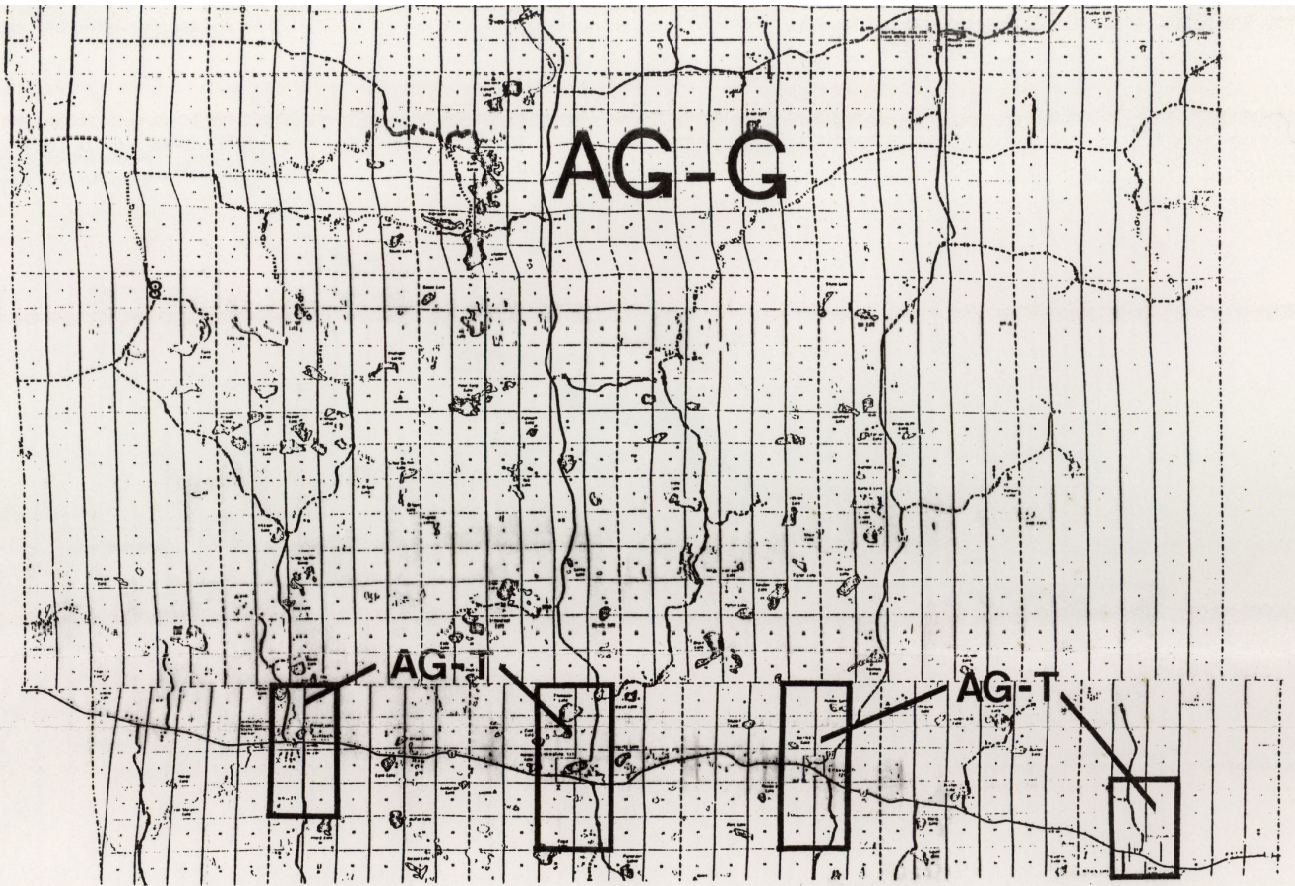
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**ZONING DISTRICT LEGEND**

AG - G	GENERAL AGRICULTURAL
AG - R	RIVER CORRIDOR AGRICULTURAL
AG - T	TRANSITIONAL AGRICULTURAL

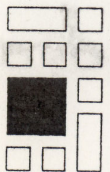


Sheridan County Unofficial Zoning/Land Use Map– South



**SHERIDAN COUNTY, NEBRASKA UNOFFICIAL ZONING MAP**

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**ZONING DISTRICT LEGEND**

AG - G      **GENERAL AGRICULTURAL**  
 AG - R      **RIVER CORRIDOR AGRICULTURAL**  
 AG - T      **TRANSITIONAL AGRICULTURAL**

## Summary of Outright, Permitted, and Conditional Uses in Sheridan County Zones

	General Agricultural	Agricultural-River Corridor	Transitional Ag- Rural Residential
Outright Uses (do not require written zoning permit or certificate of compliance)	Agricultural Uses (excluding dwellings and confined and intensive animal feeding), Grain Storage, Irrigation facilities, Signs (limit 3), Forestry, Tree farms, plant nurseries, Day/Child care in residential units	Agricultural Uses (excluding dwellings and confined and intensive animal feeding), Grain Storage, Irrigation facilities, Signs (limit 3), Forestry, Tree farms, plant nurseries, Day/Child care in residential units	Agricultural Uses (excluding dwellings and confined and intensive animal feeding), Grain Storage, Irrigation facilities, Signs (limit 3), Forestry, Tree farms, plant nurseries, Day/Child care in residential units
Permitted Principal Uses and Structures (Require zoning permit and/or certificate of compliance)	Expansion of any existing confined/intensive animal feeding use, commercial grain and produce storage, schools, Public use structures, churches, cemeteries, Wildlife/recreation, Towers, Child/Day Care, Single Family dwellings	Expansion of any existing confined/intensive animal feeding use, non-commercial grain and produce storage, schools, Public use structures, churches, cemeteries, Wildlife/recreation, Towers, Child/Day Care, Single Family dwellings	Schools, Public use structures, churches, cemeteries, wildlife/recreation, Towers, Child/Day Care, Single-Family Dwellings
Dwelling unit limitations	Not to exceed four (4) per quarter section of land with out conditional permit	Not to exceed four (4) per quarter section of land without conditional permit	Minimum bulk standards
Conditional Uses	New confined and intensive animal feeding uses, Surface application of waste, Commercial/ industrial uses, Livestock auction yards and barns, crop dusting uses, fuel and fertilizer bulk plants, landfills, salvage yards, recreation, mineral extraction, residential subdivisions greater than 4 per quarter section	Commercial/agricultural/ industrial uses, recreation, mineral extraction, residential subdivisions greater than four (4) lots per quarter section	Two and Multi-family dwellings, recreational, commercial, mineral extraction, nursing homes and group homes, commercial and industrial uses
Minimum lot area	Two (2) acres	Two (2) acres	Two (2) acres if septic; 10,000 sq. ft. sanitary sewer
Minimum lot width	150 ft.	150 ft.	60 ft.
Minimum lot frontage	66 ft.	66 ft.	50 ft.
Minimum setbacks	Front (ROW): 25 ft.; Side: 10 ft. Rear: 10 ft.	Front (ROW): 25 ft.; Side: 10 ft. Rear: 10 ft.	Front (ROW): 25 ft.; Side: 10 ft. Rear: 10 ft.
Maximum Height	40 ft. (inhabited)	40 ft. (inhabited)	40 ft. (inhabited)