

Custer County

Comprehensive plan

Comprehensive planning shows how a county can best use what it has to become or maintain the kind of place it wants to be. It specifies how present and future improvements and uses of land and other natural resources should be related. It is a guide for both public and private investment.

During development of this Comprehensive Plan, consideration was given to the historical pattern of settlement and land uses, land ownership, and the natural resource restraints of the land. The rural heritage of Custer County is steeped in agriculture, mining, timber, and open space. This document is designed not only to guide future development but also to preserve those aspects that make living in rural Custer County desirable. It is in that light that we endeavor to preserve community assets, respect property rights, accommodate managed growth and compatible economic development, and serve as responsible stewards of our natural environment through careful planning.

In the 2007 survey more than 84% of the residents that responded overwhelmingly selected the *Rural Life Style* as the most important reason that they choose to live in Custer County. Coordination and cooperation with the local municipalities and governmental agencies, along with good planning strategy and effective legislation, are the policies recommended in this comprehensive plan to achieve this goal.

The goals and policies included herein respond to the needs and conditions which exist presently and will provide the initial guidance for decision making throughout future years. Consistency with the Comprehensive plan is to be maintained when considering development decisions. Physical conditions, economic factors, environmental considerations and citizen attitudes do not remain static, but change over time. Therefore, these goals and policies must be reviewed periodically and modified when necessary to respond to changing conditions such as new census data.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GOALS

A man who does not think and plan long ahead will find trouble right at his door....Confucius BC 551- 479

1. Land Use

GOAL 1:

Maintain the unincorporated area in primary land uses. Depending upon geographic region, those uses include agricultural, mining, recreational and rural residential. (See pages 16 and 17 for information about primary land use.)

Policy 1.1.1:

Recognize the unincorporated area of the county as being primarily agricultural, minimize the conversion of agricultural land to other uses, and preserve good farm and ranch land from the intrusion of unnecessary urban uses which affect the productivity and amenities of the agricultural area. Maintain the agricultural designation at 40 acres.

Policy 1.1.2:

Recognize that urban, commercial, and industrial land uses, other than normal home occupations and agricultural value-added uses, should be accommodated within and around existing city areas.

Policy 1.1.3:

Avoid strip type growth along the highways.

Policy 1.1.4:

Consider the efficiency and economy of providing services.

GOAL 2:

Promote a desirable rural atmosphere, character, and appearance in the county.

Policy 1.2.1:

Ensure that private developers provide adequate open space within residential developments.

Policy 1.2.2:

Promote preservation of natural areas in new developments.

Policy 1.2.3:

Cluster non-agricultural development in order to preserve prime agricultural lands.



Policy 1.2.4:

Promote the abatement of accumulated trash/debris by means of local ordinance and enforcement of state and federal statutes.

Policy 1.2.5:

Permit a limited range of farm/ranch-based businesses to supplement agricultural income. The use should not negatively impact neighboring uses.

Policy 1.2.6:

Continue to prevent the proliferation of unsightly off-premises signage (i.e. billboards), by re-evaluating Ordinance #12 (Sign and Advertising Ordinance) for thoroughness, effectiveness and consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

Ironically, rural America has become viewed by a growing number of Americans as having a higher quality of life not because of what it has, but rather because of what it does not have!.....Don A. Dillman

GOAL 3:

Make land use and subdivision regulations of the county objective and consistent for ease of administration. Consider geographic regions in respect to specific land uses.

Policy 1.3.1:

Re-evaluate Ordinance #2 (Regulation for the Subdivision and Use of Land) for thoroughness, effectiveness and consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy 1.3.2:

Maintain a close working relationship with all agencies within the County in order to minimize the impact and infrastructure costs when considering new developments and divisions of land.

Policy 1.3.3:

Manage non-agricultural residential development in the rural area at a density low enough that it does not require urban services, particularly that of public sewage disposal and water supply.

Policy 1.3.4:

Maintain a working relationship with other agencies (local, state and national) that operate within the County so that development of any type is consistent with and does not violate the policies and ordinances of Custer County.



2. Transportation

GOAL 1:

Maintain a safe and balanced system of transportation facilities capable of serving the needs of all residents and supporting the economy.

Policy 2.1.1:

Promote a safe, well-maintained road system, with consideration to the importance of access for emergency vehicles.

Policy 2.1.2:

Maintain the County road system to provide for the efficient movement of people, goods, and services.

Policy 2.1.3:

Promote residential development densities that are reflective of the carrying capacity of the County's transportation infrastructure.

3. Facilities

GOAL 1:

County government buildings should be located and maintained in a manner that provides convenient access to residents being served, where appropriate public facilities and services are available or can be provided, and designed for efficient and frugal use of public monies.

Policy 3.1.1

The level of service standards for County buildings should be based on:

- a. Consideration of national, state and professional standards for the applicable space.
- b. Adherence to applicable Federal and State laws.
- c. Consideration of the ability of the County to fund ongoing costs of operations and maintenance.

GOAL 2:

The County should continue its joint planning efforts with the City of Custer with respect to the County Airport so that personal and business flying needs are met.

Policy 3.2.1

Ensure continuation of the airport as a safe, efficient and essential public facility.



Policy 3.2.2:

Support upgrades to the County airport when commercial demand and county revenues warrant such improvements.

Policy 3.2.3

Work towards the mitigation of non-compatible land uses in the Airport Zoning District.

GOAL 3

Support the school district in its goal to ensure that it has adequate facilities, equipment and staff to meet the needs of the student population.

Policy 3.3.1

Promote land uses and densities for residential growth that enable the school district to maintain a quality education system without increasing taxes.

GOAL 4

Work toward improving public confidence in the schools and build partnerships in support of public education

Policy 3.4.1

Utilize public education facilities as community service centers for meeting the educational, social, health, cultural and recreational needs of all ages and sectors of the community.

4. Environment

*Always plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark
..Richard Cushing, Catholic Cardinal..*

GOAL 1:

Preserve and protect the County's natural resources.

Policy 4.1.1:

Promote development strategies that help protect and sustain the regional water supply.

Policy 4.1.2:

Identify those areas of the County that are scenic because of land forms and natural features and protect them through development guidelines and other appropriate methods.

Policy 4.1.3:

Establish design standards that would address limiting the visual impact of development on the scenic areas.



Policy 4.1.4:

Utilize the available governmental resources and agencies to guide agricultural development in the manner most compatible with the land, its water, minerals, and other natural resources.

Policy 4.1.5:

Preserve areas designated as floodway by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as undeveloped unless development is in accordance with Ordinance #6 (Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance).

Policy 4.1.6:

Work with the incorporated communities to provide commercial and industrial sites with sufficient utilities to accommodate anticipated development of a type that would not degrade the environment and would preserve primary land uses.

GOAL 2:

Preserve Historic Sites and structures

Policy 4.2.1:

Design new structures and site improvements, including clearing and grading to enhance, rather than harm historic sites.

Policy 4.2.2:

Encourage the preservation, maintenance and adaptive reuse of historic buildings and sites.

5. Housing

GOAL 1:

Provide for a wide range and variety of housing suitable for households at diverse income-levels that is compatible with the limitations established by the environment, transportation network, community facilities and services.

Policy 5.1.1:

Recognize that future housing needs can be met through of a variety of dwelling types at a variety of densities of development. Include opportunities for multi-family and mobile home parks uses subject to site location and criteria that promote compatibility with the environment and community character.

Policy 5.1.2:

Preserve and protect the identifiable character and sense of privacy within each residential area from encroachment by incompatible uses of land.



Policy 5.1.3:

Encourage standards of construction to be to the latest applicable State recommended building code.

6. Economic Development

GOAL 1:

Continue efforts to provide year-round employment opportunities and enhance the tax base by encouraging compatible industrial, commercial, office and retail facilities to locate or expand in Custer County

Policy 6.1.1:

Maintain relationships with federal, state, regional and municipal economic development organizations.

Policy 6.1.2:

Establish appropriate location standards, area and bulk limitations, and design criteria for commercial development, consistent with efforts to preserve community character and promote compatibility among differing land uses.

Policy 6.1.3:

Promote locational criteria for employment-generating development based on availability of appropriate services (highway access, water, sewer emergency management, etc.).

Policy 6.1.4:

Encourage the expansion or location of firms in the County.

*While the spirit of
neighborliness was
important on the
frontier because
neighbors were so few,
it is even more
important now because
our neighbors are so
many.....Lady Bird*



PLANNING AREA

For the purposes of this Plan, The Comprehensive Plan for Custer County shall include all lands encompassed by the legal boundaries of the County with the exception of the incorporated municipalities of Buffalo Gap, Custer, Fairburn, Hermosa and Pringle. In addition, there are large quantities of lands within Custer County that are managed by the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the State of South Dakota. The Custer County Comprehensive Plan includes data relative to such lands as they are an important and integral part of the County landscape and economy.

LEGAL POWERS

Authority: The Plan having been prepared, it may be adopted in whole or in part, by the County Commission pursuant to SDCL § Chapters 11-2, 11-4, and 11-6. The Comprehensive Plan of Custer County may be updated, amended or extended in whole, or in part, by the County Planning Commission pursuant to SDCL § Chapters 11-2 and 11-6.

LOCATION

Custer County, totaling approximately 1,552 square miles and 993,280 acres of land, is located in the southwestern part of South Dakota. The western part of the County is part of the scenic Black Hills. The County is bounded on the north



Custer County GIS

and northeast by Pennington County; on the southeast by Shannon County; on the south by Fall River County and on the west by Weston County, Wyoming. The City of Custer, an important tourist activity center, is located in the north central part of the County and is approximately 40 miles

southwest of Rapid City, a major urban center of the State, and is 32 miles north of Hot Springs, another tourist center. Pierre, the State capital, is 213 miles northeast of Custer

Custer County is served by U.S. Highways 385 and 16 and South Dakota State Highways 36, 40, 79, 87, and 89. In addition, U.S. Highway 18 is located just to the south of Custer County and convenient access to this highway is provided by U.S. Highway 385 and South Dakota State Highways 89 and 79. U.S. Highways 385 and 16 and South Dakota State Highway 79 provide convenient access to Interstate Highway 90 to the north, an east-west facility. Custer County is traversed by several railroads. Those rail lines are currently owned by Burlington Northern, Santa Fe (BNSF) and Dakota Minnesota and Eastern Railroad. It is



accessible by air with airports located in Rapid City, Custer, Custer State Park, and Hot Springs, South Dakota, Chadron, Nebraska and Newcastle, Wyoming.

HISTORY OF CUSTER COUNTY

Prior to the expedition led by General George Custer in 1874, this area of the Black Hills was left mostly to fur traders, trappers and the Native American population. Once the discovery of gold was announced, numerous settlements and mining camps sprang up throughout the Black Hills. In the year 1875, Custer County was established and the City of Custer was staked out. The gold rush in Custer was short lived due to the large strike in the Deadwood area. However, mining for other materials continued and the area became settled with pioneers, ranchers and lumbermen. The coming of the Burlington Railroad in 1890 opened the county to further development, as did the establishment of the Harney National Forest Headquarters in Custer in 1898, and the beginning of Custer State Park in 1913.

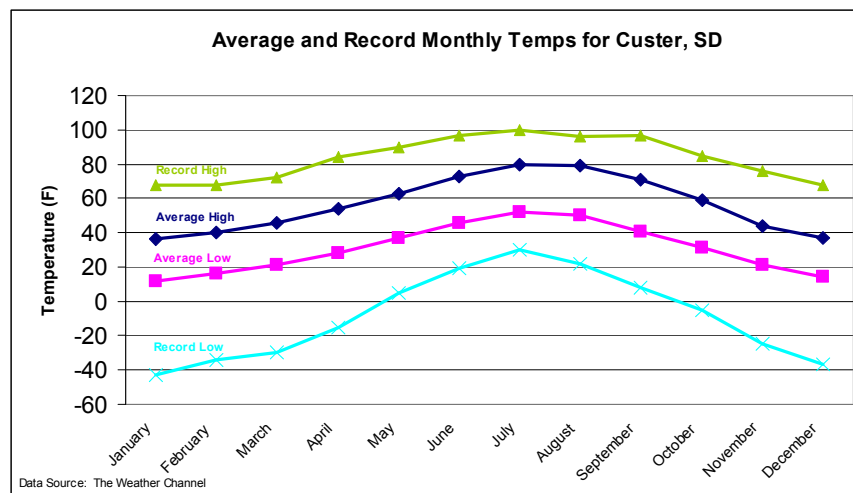
Custer County has several incorporated communities: the City of Custer (population estimate of 1,984), Buffalo Gap, founded in 1885 (population estimate of 164), Hermosa (population estimate of 354), and Pringle (population estimate of 125). Buffalo Gap, Fairburn and Hermosa are areas that are primarily engaged in ranching activities. The Pringle area still has some mining interests as well as ranching and forestry.

Geographically, over a third of the county is in the Black Hills National Forest, with Wind Cave National Park, Custer State Park and Jewel Cave National Monument are all within its borders. These features, as well as Harney Peak, and Mt. Rushmore that are nearby, beautiful Sylvan and Stockade Lakes, and the Crazy Horse Monument (under construction), act as magnets drawing literally hundreds of thousands of tourists to Custer County each year, insuring that tourism plays an important role in the local economy.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS AND NATURAL FEATURES

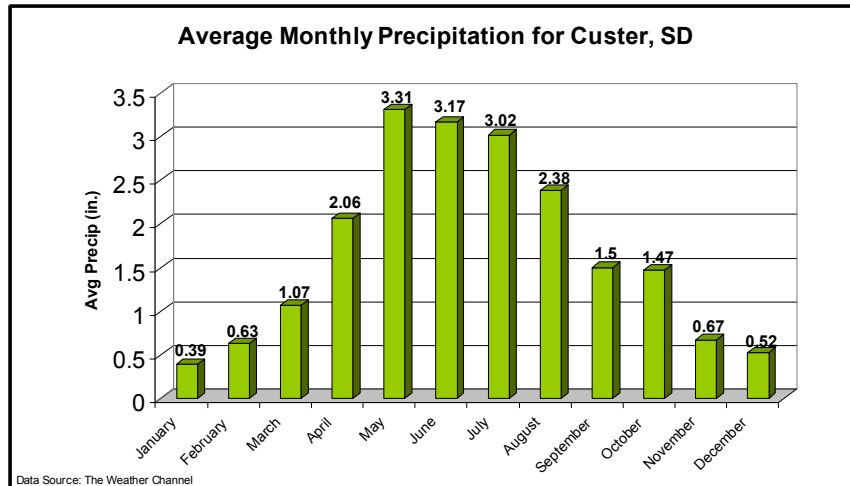
CLIMATE

The climate of the State of South Dakota is continental in nature. Because of the influence of higher elevations of the Black Hills, the climate of Custer County, as well as the whole of the Black Hills Region, is markedly different from that of the rest of the State, especially in areas immediately adjacent to the Black Hills. “Chinook” winds during the winter months, coupled with frequent sunny skies, make the Black Hills the warmest part of the State during the winter. The cold arctic air masses which cover the rest of the State seek the lower elevations and are absent in the Black Hills Region. The converse of this situation exists in the summer months. Although the temperature in the eastern part of the County will be higher, the elevation of the Black Hills results in cooler temperatures than in the surrounding plains areas.



The average temperature during the course of the year for Custer County is approximately 40.7 degrees. The lowest temperature record, near the city of Custer, occurred January 19, 1963, when the mercury dropped to -43 degrees. The highest temperature on record for Custer occurred July 12, 1954, when the mercury climbed to 100 degrees. As compared to the community of Hermosa, where the elevation is closer to 3000 feet mean sea level, the highest recorded temperature was 111 degrees in 2006. The temperature in Hermosa and the surrounding plains area averages 3 degrees warmer than in Custer.

Average annual precipitation for Custer County is approximately 17.07 inches. Custer County receives a substantial amount of this precipitation during the period April through September. Approximately 13.56 inches of Custer County's annual precipitation falls during that six month period.



GEOGRAPHY

The topography of Custer County consists of the rough, mountainous and largely forested terrain of the Black Hills in the western portion of the County and the Pierre Plain Region, a part of the High Plains, in the eastern portion. The Plains topography varies from nearly level to strongly rolling, especially where streams and rivers have dissected the Plain. The creeks and tributaries of the County drain into the Cheyenne River which eventually discharges into the Missouri River.

The Black Hills geologic features are not hills but rather they are an eastern outcropping of the Rocky Mountains. This area rises about 4,000 feet above the prairie. The highest point is Harney Peak with an elevation of 7,242 feet. This peak is the highest point in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains.

The prairie landscape exists from the eastern border of Custer County west past the north-south Highway 79, a distance varying between 16 to 25 miles. The elevation remains fairly constant within this area. It varies from 2,500 feet above sea level at the northern border with Pennington County to 3,175 feet at the southern border with Fall River County.

On the west side of Highway 79 the landscape begins to take on the foot-hills aspect of the Black Hills. The topography begins to reflect the more mountainous features of higher ridges, rock out-croppings and a noticeable increase in elevation. This change all begins within a distance of four to six miles from the

boundaries of Custer State Park, Wind Cave National Park and the Black Hills National Forest.

The elevation throughout this portion of Custer County varies from 7,242 (Harney Peak) in the North to 4,500 feet in the south. The northern border has a fairly consistent average elevation of 6,000 ft. The elevation along the southern border with Fall River County varies from 3,500 feet in the west to 4,300 feet toward the east. The average elevation is approximately 4,000 feet.

GEOLOGY AND MINERALS

The western part of Custer County is comprised primarily of granite-based formations with sedimentary rocks such as sandstone, shale and limestone making up the remaining geologic structure. The eastern part of the county reflects the influence of a pre-historic inland sea. The county has an abundance of minerals. Mica, feldspar, granite, quartz, beryl, and lithium can be found primarily in the mountainous terrain. Some tin and tungsten have also been mined.

The uplift and subsequent erosion of the Black Hills are responsible for the accessibility of South Dakota's abundant and diverse mineral locations. Because much of the Black Hills is National Forest, it is available to the miner, prospector and collector.

The many pegmatites exposed in the southern Black Hills are well known for their variety of minerals and are particularly famous for their secondary phosphate minerals. Although some pegmatite mining for feldspar still continues, the number of mines worked for beryl, muscovite, columbite-tantalite, amblygonite, spodumene, and feldspar probably peaked in the 1940's.

One of the areas best known gemstones is a chalcedony known as the Fairburn Agate. These are brightly colored banded agates. Chalcedony silica has a pearly luster that looks like pearly, frozen bubbles of milk.

SOILS

There are a number of relatively shallow soil types which exist in Custer County and throughout the Black Hills Region which may be divided into four broad groups; these groups have varying soil characteristics and topography. The first classification consists of mostly loamy soils which have developed on the bottom lands and nearly level to sloping high terraces. The primary uses of this type of soil are crop agriculture, building sites and recreation. Developed along the undulating and steep uplands, the second classification is loamy and sandy soils. Best suited for rangeland, these soils, due to their nature and composition, are moderately to severely limited to other uses. The third classification, developed

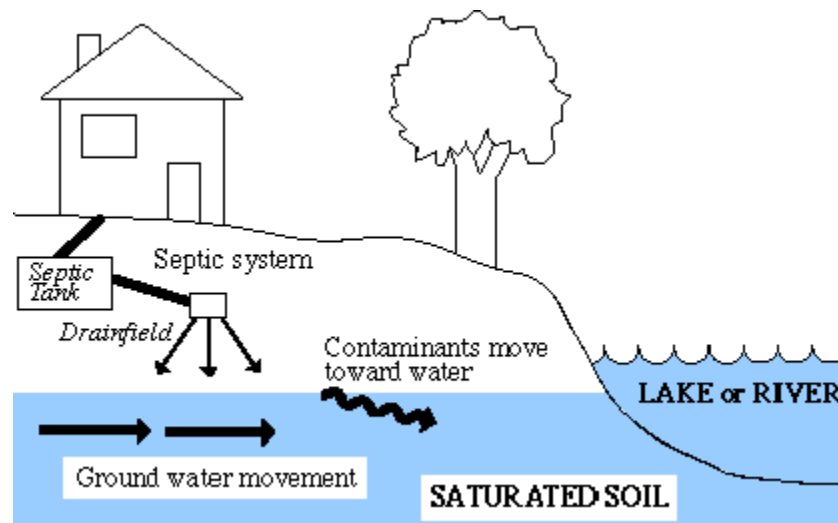


from the clay shales on broad uplands and steep slopes, is dense clay in composition, limited primarily to rangeland use. The fourth soil type to be found in Custer County is loamy to clay. Developed in the undulating to steep slopes, rolling plateaus and rocky ridges of the Black Hills, this composition is severely limited to timber, recreation, wildlife and rangeland uses.

HYDROLOGY

The Custer County area has six lakes that offer recreational opportunities including camping, fishing and boating. These lakes are Bismarck, Center, Lakota, Legion, Stockade and Sylvan. All of these lakes were created as reservoirs. There are other bodies of water located in the county that serve as water sources for livestock. The Cheyenne River meanders through the county along its eastern borders. This river receives flow from several watersheds in the county such as Beaver, French, Lane Johnny, Coolidge, and Battle Creeks.

Population growth, resource development, and periodic droughts have the potential to affect the quantity, quality, and availability of water within the Black Hills area. Human influences have the potential to degrade water quality for both ground water and surface water as well. For ground water, the potential for contamination exists due to development on and upgradient of aquifer recharge areas, and large and relatively fast flow velocities. For surface water, various land-use practices can affect water quality. Contamination from mining operations and by failing septic systems can have a direct effect on water quality.



	<u>Berner</u>	<u>Bismarck Lk</u>	<u>Center Lk</u>	<u>Lakota Lk</u>
Feature:	Reservoir	Reservoir	Reservoir	Reservoir
USGS quad:		Custer	Iron Mountain	Iron Mountain
Latitude:		43.7750	43.803	43.8500
Longitude:		-103.5138	-103.4188	-103.397
Elevation:		5200 ft	4692 ft	4475 ft
Acres:		27.2	26.5	11
Mean Depth:		9.7 ft	17 ft	
Max. Depth:		28 ft	43 ft	
Shoreline:		2.35 mi.	1.1 mi.	

	<u>Legion Lk</u>	<u>Lake of the Pines</u>	<u>Norbeck</u>	<u>Stockade Lk</u>
Feature:	Reservoir	Lake	Reservoir	Reservoir
USGS quad:	Iron Mountain	Custer	Wind Cave	Custer
Latitude:	43.7594	43.7750	43.5800	43.7647
Longitude:	-103.4632	-103.5138	-103.4860	-103.5141
Elevation:	5013 ft	5200 ft	4245 ft	5171 ft
Acres:	9.2	0.66		120
Mean Depth:	9.7 ft	9.7 ft		15.8
Max. Depth:	22 ft	28 ft		-
Shoreline:	0.6 mi.	2.35 mi.		3.7 mi.

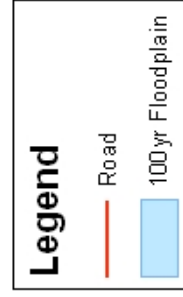
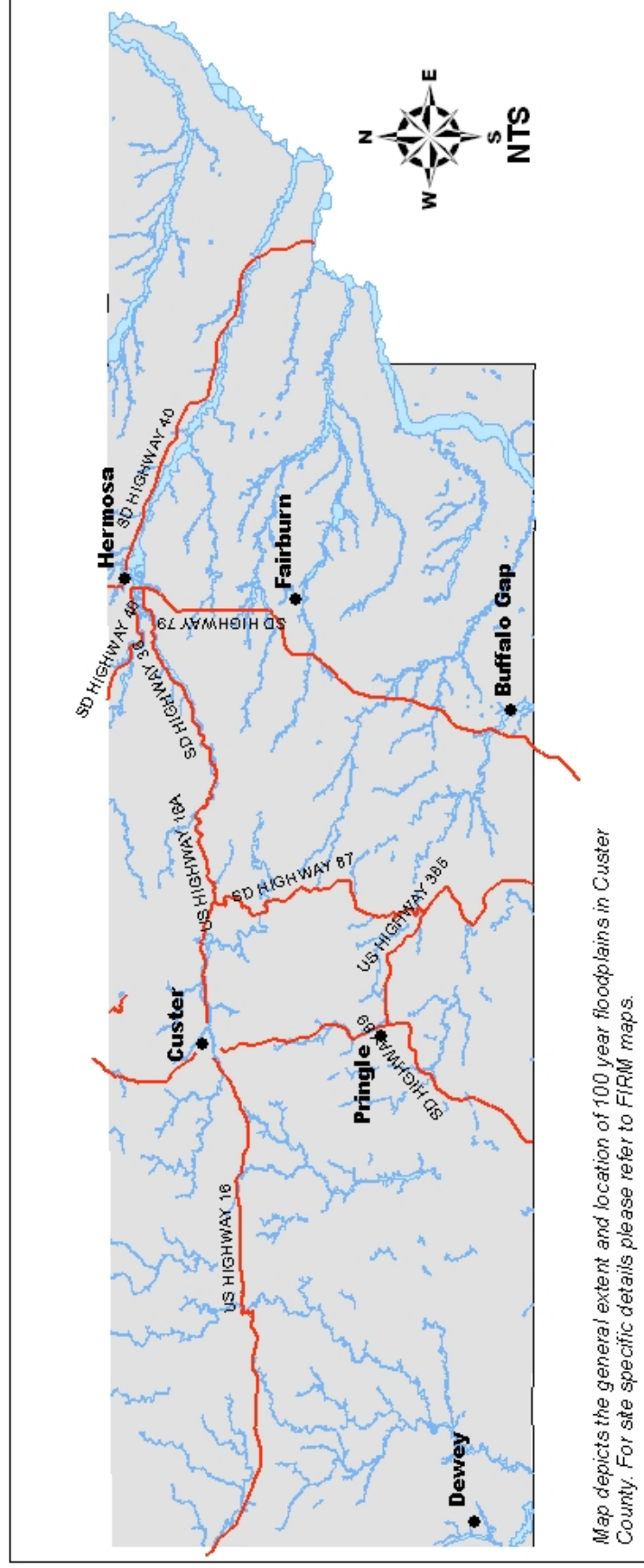
	<u>Sylvan Lake</u>	<u>Ventling</u>	<u>Ward</u>
Feature:	Reservoir	Reservoir	Reservoir
USGS quad:	Custer	Four Mile	Four Mile
Latitude:	48.8475	43.6583	43.6447
Longitude:	-103.5657	-103.6791	-103.6794
Elevation:	6175 ft	5328 ft	5194 ft
Acres:	17.3		
Mean Depth:	12.8 ft		
Max. Depth:	30 ft		
Shoreline:	1 mi.		

Water area = 0.9%

Land Area = 99.91 %



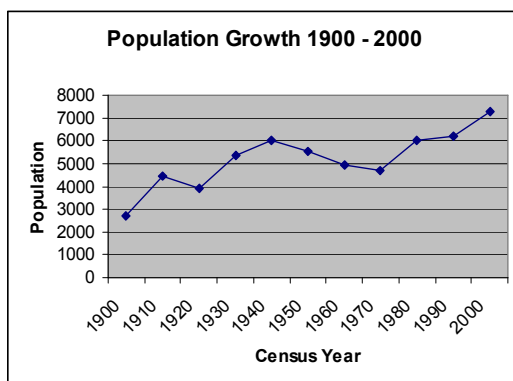
Floodplain



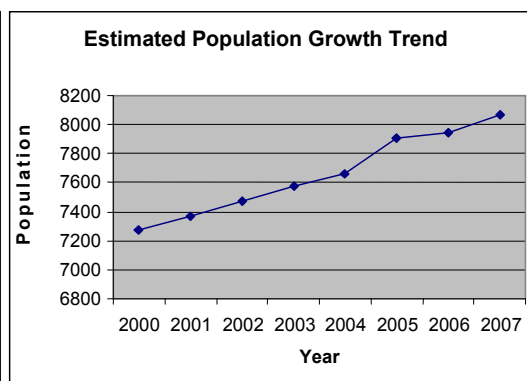
POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS

Based on a population of 4.7 persons per square mile, Custer County is considered a rural frontier county. An important parameter of the planning process is the analysis and projection of the population of the planning area. After estimating the size and composition of the future population, it becomes possible to determine the future level of demand for facilities and to develop indices for a large number of problems which typically confront those persons who are actively engaged in making decisions related to the planning process. If the Custer County Comprehensive Plan is to provide the County Planning Commission with a realistic guide to the future development of the County, then it is necessary that an analysis of past population trends and the projection of future population levels be as accurate and realistic as possible.

As of the U.S Census of 2000, there were 7275 residents, 2970 households, and 2067 families residing in the county. There were 3624 housing units for an average density of 2 per square mile. The median age of 44 is an indication that the County is not retaining its youth. Many young adults tend to migrate out of the county after high school, while inward migration consists of retirees relocating to this area. There is a net increase in total number of households, but fewer people per household, resulting in a moderate population growth. By 2010 the median age will be 45, while those in the 55-59 age group are expected to increase by 60 percent. This points to an aging population that will look for amenities such as cultural and recreational activities in which to expend their time and resources as well as availability of quality health care.



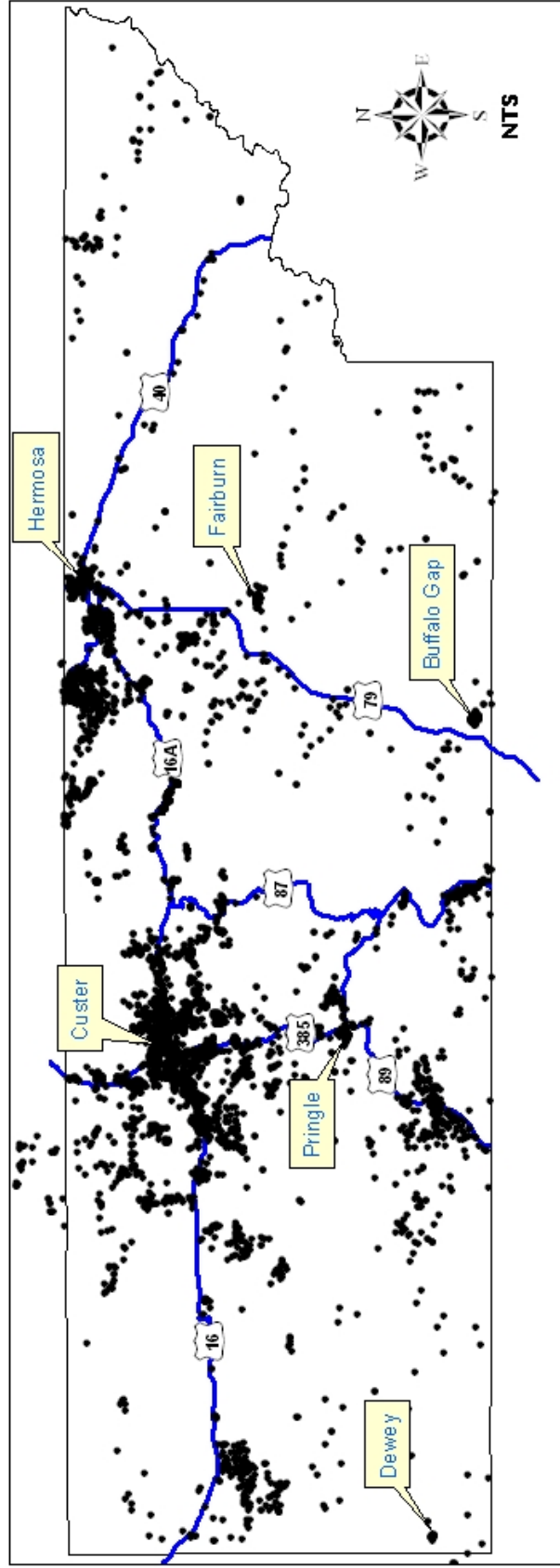
Population change 1900-2000: + 65.10%



Population Change 2000-2007: + 6.9%

Population change 1990-2000: + 15.06%

Population Density



Legend
 ● Residence\Structures



POPULATION STATISTICS

Custer County Population: 1900-2004

1900- 2,728 1910- 4,458 1920- 3,907 1930- 5,353 1940- 6,023 1950- 5,517
 1960- 4,906 1970- 4,698 1980- 6,000 1990- 6,179 1991- 6,167 1992- 6,345
 1993- 6,441 1994- 6,663 1995- 6,737 1996- 6,823 1997- 6,910 1998- 6,945
 1999- 7,025 2000- 7,275 2001- 7,370 2002- 7,467 2003-7574 2004- 7,665

Custer, City Population: 1940-2000

1940- 1,845 1950- 2,017 1960- 2,105 1970- 1,597 1980- 1,830 1990- 1,741
 2000- 1,860

Hermosa, Town Population: 1940-2000

1940- 121 1950- 123 1960- 126 1970- 150 1980- 251 est.
 1990- 242 2000- 315

Pringle, Town Population: 1940-2000

1940- 273 1950- 193 1960- 145 1970- 86 1980- 105 est. 1990- 96
 2000- 125

Custer County Unorganized Territory (UT) Population: 1940-2000

1940- 3,482 1950- 2,918 1960- 2,289 1970- 2,660 1980-3,587 1990- 3,798
 2000-4,730

Custer County

Under 18 years old 21.4%
 18 to 34 years old 18.4%
 35 to 54 years old 28.5%
 55 to 64 years old 14.8%
 Persons 65 and older 16.9%

Custer

Under 5 years old 6.0%
 5 to 19 years old 19.7%
 20 to 54 years old 49.7%
 Persons 55 and older 24.6%
 Median Age 41.7 Yr.

Hermosa

Under 5 years old 5.7%
 5 to 19 years old 23.5%
 20 to 54 years old 48.2%
 Persons 55 and older 22.5%
 Median Age 37.4 Yr.

Pringle

Under 5 years old 6.4%
 5 to 19 years old 24.0%
 20 to 54 years old 44.0%
 Persons 55 and older 25.6%
 Median Age 38.5 Yr.

East Custer UT

Under 5 years old 4.1%
 5 to 19 years old 22.5%
 20 to 54 years old 48.5%
 Persons 55 and older 24.8%
 Median Age 42.6 Yr.

West Custer UT

Under 5 years old 3.9%
 5 to 19 years old 23.2%
 20 to 54 years old 41.1%
 Persons 55 and older 31.8%
 Median Age 45Yr.

Information Source: US Census Bureau



HOUSING STATISTICS

Custer County

<i>Total Units</i>	3,624	
Occupied	2,970	81.9%
Seasonal	366	10.0%

Structure

Single Unit	1,941	65.3%
Multiple Units	221	7.8%
Mobile Homes	798	26.9%

Custer

<i>Total Units</i>	934	
Occupied	825	88.3%
Seasonal	30	3.2%

Structure

single Unit	585	61.9%
Multiple Units	234	24.8%
Mobile Homes	126	13.3%

Hermosa

<i>Total Units</i>	132	
Occupied	130	93.5%
Seasonal	3	2.2%

Structure

Single Unit	71	51.8%
Multiple Units	2	1.5%
Mobile Homes	62	45.3%

Pringle

<i>Total Units</i>	64	
Occupied	46	71.9%
Seasonal	2	3.1%

Structure

Single Unit	29	42%
Multiple Units	2	2.9%
Mobile Homes	36	52.2%

LAND OWNERSHIP AND USE

PUBLIC LANDS

The Black Hills has experienced outside exploration since the 1840's. Fur traders and fur trappers were the first non-Native Americans to travel this area. Later, in 1874, the Custer expedition explored portions of the Black Hills and discovered gold deposits at French Creek, several miles east of where the City of Custer is now located. Numerous settlements and mining camps sprang up throughout the Black Hills.

Civilization brought with it an ever-increasing need for lumber to sustain the ranches, homes, businesses and mining operations. Timber within the Black Hills was viewed as being an inexhaustible resource. Little or no thought was given to the effects on the land from these timbering practices.

The need to protect these timber resources was brought to the attention of the public by wide spread logging operations and a series of large fires in the early 1890's. In order to protect the land against fires and poor lumbering practices, President Grover Cleveland established the Black Hills Forest Reserve on February 22, 1897. The Black Hills Forest Reserve was transferred to the Forest Service and was renamed the Black Hills National Forest in 1907. Extensive re-forestation was required to replace large tracts of timber that had been depleted or seriously diminished by fires, insect infestation and indiscriminate harvesting. Large scale planting and thinning projects occurred in 1905, 1914, the 1930s and the 1940s.

On May 16, 1911, President Taft signed an act that used certain unreserved lands, and reserved lands that were part of the Black Hills National Forest, to establish the Harney National Forest. The boundaries were later modified on February 15, 1912 and on June 15, 1920 President Wilson signed a proclamation that set aside up to 30,000 acres of the Harney National Forest for the establishment of Custer State Park Game Sanctuary.

The Bureau of Land Management manages other public lands scattered throughout the county. The Norbeck Wildlife Preserve consists of federal and state acres located between Custer State Park and the Black Hills National Forest to the north. Custer State Park is located in the eastern part of the county. This is the largest of the twelve South Dakota State parks. Custer State Park was so designated in 1919 when its name was changed from Custer State Forest. It is located 3 miles east of the City of Custer on Highway 16A. It extends eastward toward the community of Hermosa. The park landscape includes open meadows, heavily timbered areas, numerous streams and mountainous terrain. Harney Peak (elevation 7,242) and four lakes (Sylvan, Stockade, Legion and Center) are located near or within the boundaries of the park.

Custer State Park Annual visitors \approx 1,400,000

South Dakota's premier State Park comprises 71,000 acres and is famous for its bison herds, other wildlife, scenic drives, historic sites, visitor centers, fishing lakes and interpretive programs. Seven campgrounds with 323 sites located throughout the park offer comfort stations and free showers.

There are two Visitor Centers within the park: the Peter Norbeck Visitor Center in the northeast section of the park, and the Wildlife Station Visitor Center on Wildlife Loop Road. Many naturalist programs are offered to young and old alike. Excellent fishing, rock climbing, horseback riding, hiking, biking, boating, buffalo Jeep safari rides and scenic byways keep visitors busy by day. At night a chuck wagon dinner or a professional theater production at the Black Hills Playhouse is offered. Campfire programs can be found at Blue Bell, Center Lake, State Game Lodge and Stockade Lake campground amphitheaters.

Four unique resorts operate within Custer State Park: Sylvan Lake Resort, the park's crown jewel, with beautiful mountain and lake vistas; Legion Lake Resort, a family favorite; State Game Lodge, stately accommodations on the National Register of Historic Places; and Blue Bell Lodge & Resort, offering a taste of cowboy living.

The Custer National Forest was created January 13, 1920 and in 1928, an area of 678,189 acres was transferred to the Black Hills National Forest. The Black Hills National Forest and the Harney National Forest were combined on February 1, 1954 to form one consolidated Black Hills National Forest

The US Forest Service manages the Black Hills National Forest in central and western Custer County. It also manages prairie lands within the Buffalo Gap National Grasslands located in the very eastern portion of Custer County.

The National Park Service maintains two very special geologic features, Wind Cave National Park and Jewel Cave National Monument. Wind Cave National Park is located in the southeastern part of Custer County, south of Custer State Park. Jewel Cave National Monument is approximately 13 miles west of the City of Custer. Both locations are world-renowned for their extensive underground caverns and passageways.

Wind Cave National Park Annual visitors \approx 78,000

Wind Cave is a national park located in the south central area of Custer County. Established in 1903 by President Theodore Roosevelt, it was the seventh U.S. National Park and the first cave to be designated a national

park anywhere in the world. The cave is notable for its displays of the calcite formation known as boxwork. Approximately 95 percent of the world's boxwork formations are found in Wind Cave. Wind Cave is also known for its frostwork. The cave is also considered a three-dimensional maze cave. The cave passed Hoelloch cave in Switzerland on February 11th, 2006 to become fourth-longest in the world with 119.58 miles (192 km) of explored cave passageways. Above ground, the park includes the largest remaining natural mixed-grass prairie in the United States.

Jewel Cave National Monument Annual visitors ≈ 120,000

Jewel Cave, currently the second longest cave in the world, with about 135 miles (217 km) of mapped passageways, is located approximately 13 miles west of the town of Custer in South Dakota's Black Hills. It became a national monument in 1908.

Summary of Significant governmental land management endeavors include:

<u>United State Forest Service</u>	
Black Hills National Forest	311,329 acres
Buffalo Gap National Grassland	57,348 acres
<u>National Park Service</u>	
Jewel Cave National Monument	1,273 acres
Wind Cave National Park	28,295 acres
<u>Bureau of Land Management</u>	
Federal Lands	3,680 acres
<u>State of South Dakota</u>	
Custer State Park	73,000 acres
School & Public Lands	7,321 acres
Game, Fish & Parks (Wildlife Division)	<u>2,071 acres</u>
Total	484,317
acres	

PRIVATE LANDS

Custer County contains a hodgepodge of federal, state, local government, and privately owned lands. Roughly 48% of the county is under governmental management, either by the State of South Dakota or by the United States Government. Custer County private land ownership is comprised of three basic components, agricultural (farming & ranching), recreational, and residential (year round and seasonal). Approximately 47.8% of Custer County land falls within the agricultural designation. The remaining 3-4 % is comprised of local government properties, private residences, businesses, and non-profit organizations.

The following are the land use designations used in the development of the Current Primary Land Use and Projected Land Use Maps

Rural Residential

The Rural Residential category is intended to encourage housing densities comparable to developed and developing areas within the county. It is appropriate to create higher and lower density developments to account for a mix of housing types for various ages, life styles and income levels. The location and densities of residential development should be dependent on the availability of roads, utilities and public services, conformity to surrounding uses, and the land's ability to sustain such development rates.

High Density development is intended to include single family, attached and detached dwellings of one unit per two acres (.5 units per acre). The density can be increased depending upon the availability of public water and sewer.

Medium Density rural residential is a category designed for single family development with a maximum overall density of one residential structure for lots between two and ten acres in size (.5 to .1 dwelling units per acre).

Low Density rural residential is a category designed for single family residential development with a maximum overall density of one residential structure per ten acres of area (.1 dwelling unit per acre). The intent of this category is to plan for large lot residential areas while maintaining the existing rural character.

As an incentive to preserve open space and natural features, Cluster Development would be encouraged in all Rural Residential areas. Cluster Development would allow higher densities as an option if the development is designed to be compatible with the surrounding area in character, design and scale and offer open space. A 10 to 15 percent increase in density is typical for cluster developing.

Agriculture

The Agriculture category includes the majority of land with prime agricultural soils, working farms and ranches, agriculture accessory uses, special terrain areas, and woodlots. Agricultural land is valuable both as a commodity and as a natural resource, and this category is intended to help maintain and strengthen the agricultural economy as well as the agricultural way of life. Conservation of agricultural land is a method of preserving the rural character of Custer County.

Commercial

The commercial designation is a mix of retail, office, and small scale industry. These uses would meet the needs of a countywide market, on a day-to-day basis. The commercial uses may include everyday uses such as a large grocery, drugstore, hardware store, and other more specialized uses such as a florist, small restaurant, or card shop as well as professional offices. Small-scale industry could include a tool and die shop or a service station/auto repair center. This mixture provides variety and convenience to the citizens of the county. Locations of these type of land uses will tend to be along highway corridors near the City of Custer and Town of Hermosa.

Recreation/Public Trust

The Recreation/Public Trust category encompasses all lands that are owned and operated by public and semi-public organizations that provide a service to the population. Such properties may be in the form of local, state and national parks, and conservation easements. Facilities such as school buildings and lands, county buildings, as well as state and federal facilities are included in this category.

Agricultural Land

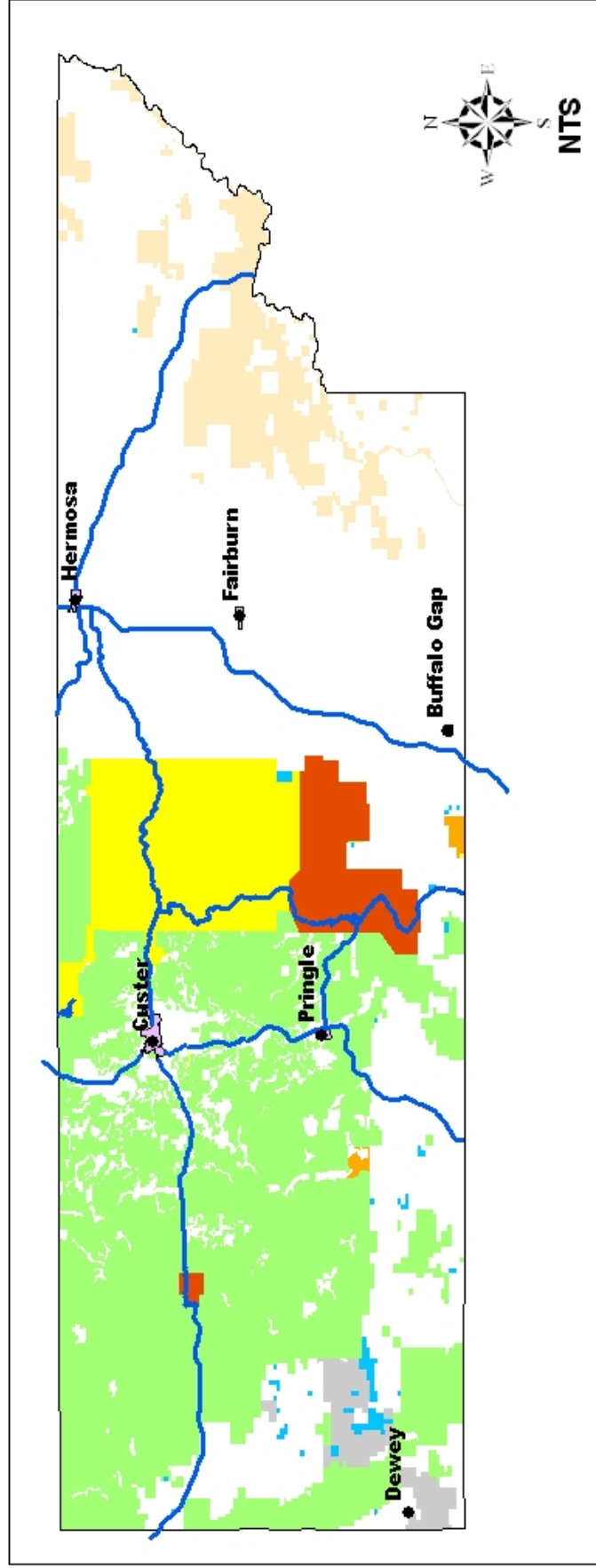
<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Farms</u>	<u>Number of Acres</u>	<u>Ave/Acre/Farm</u>
1890	346	72,434	209.3
1900	402	126,278	314.1
1910	965	282,345	292.6
1920	646	407,060	630.1
1925	561	440,875	785.9
1930	629	521,186	828.6
1935	645	555,072	860.6
1940	554	526,219	949.9
1945	453	626,907	1,384
1950	469	692,996	1,477
1954	380	684,354	1,800
1959	355	642,492	1,809
1964	305	605,495	1,985
1969	306	573,273	1,873
1974	266	476,732	1,794
1978	272	525,278	1,931
1987	303	477,361	1,575
1992	323	462,238	1,431
1997	326	476,238	1,462
2002	303	589,129	1,944

Total land area in Custer County 996,480 Acres

Percentage of Land in Agriculture

1950	692,996	70.0%
1969	573,273	57.5%
1974	476,732	47.8%
1987	477,361	47.9%
1997	476,238	47.8%

Land Ownership

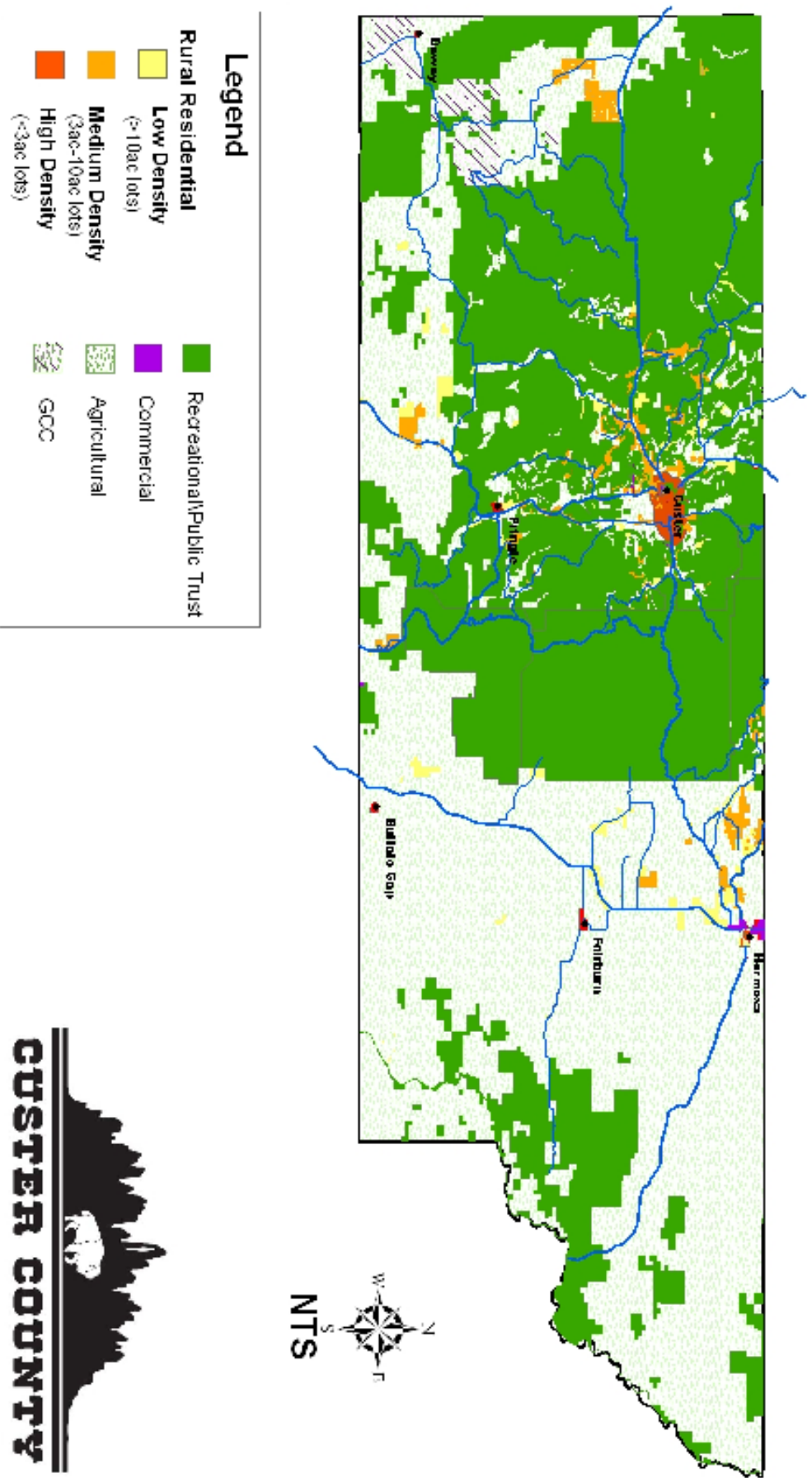


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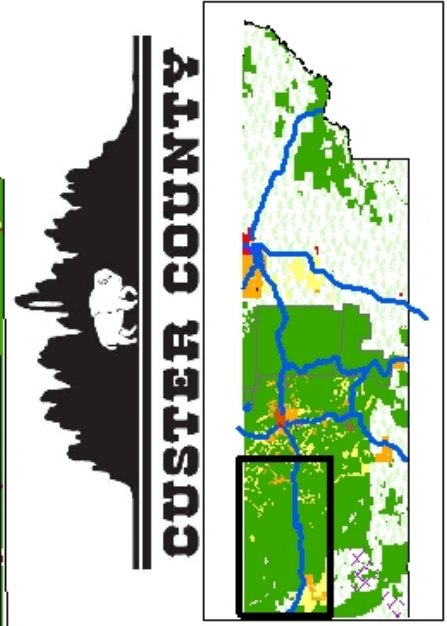
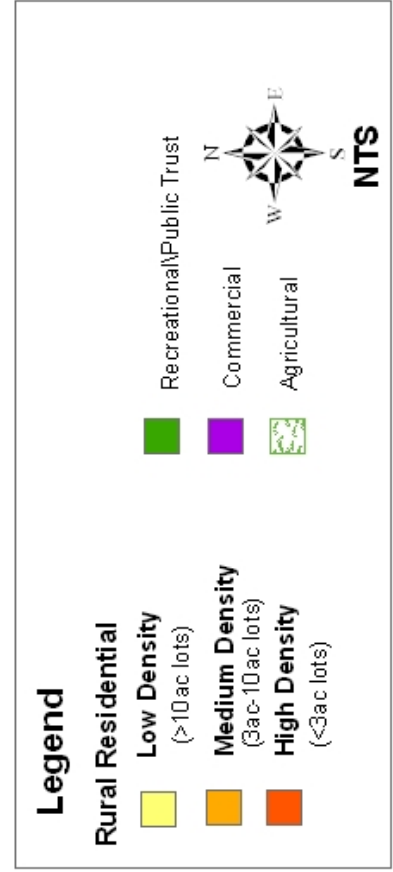
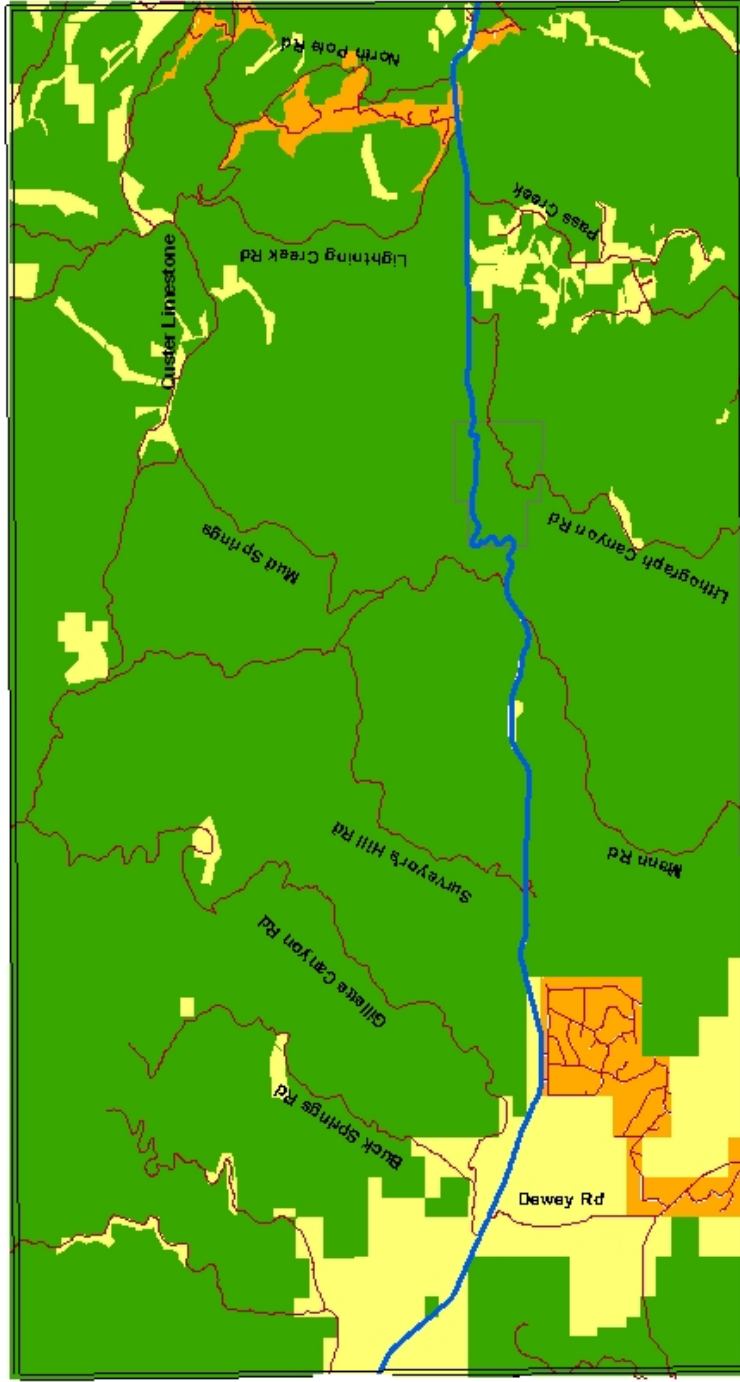
- Buffalo Gap National Grassland
 - SD GFP
 - National Park Monument
 - GCC DACOTAH, INC
 - Black Hills National Forest
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - City Limits
 - SD State
 - SD/US Highway
- Remaining lands are under Private ownership



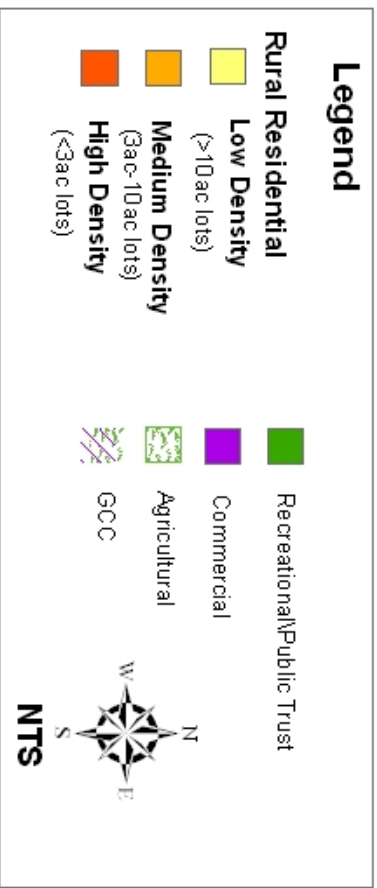
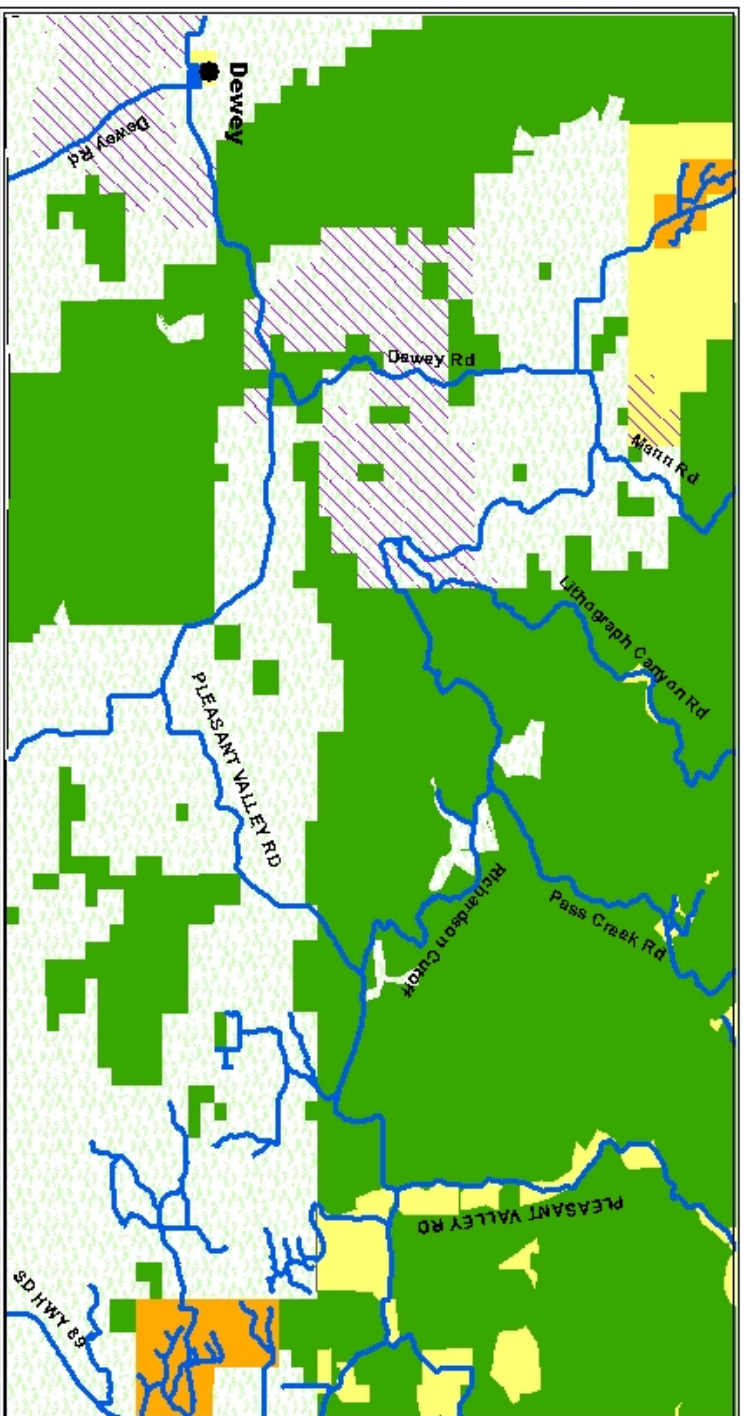
Current Primary Land Use (2008)



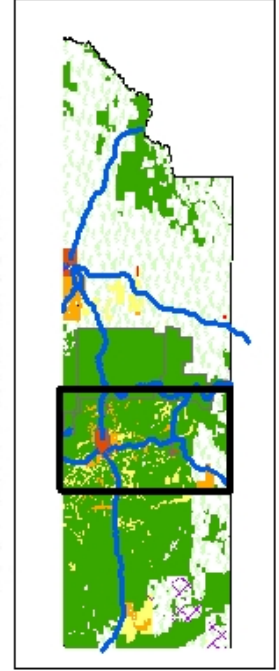
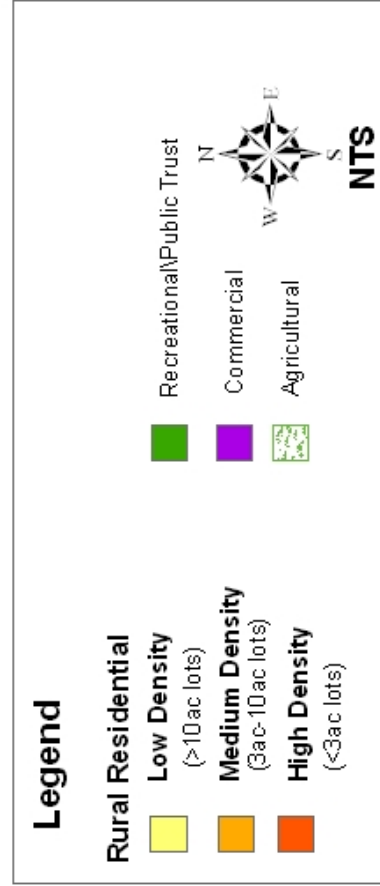
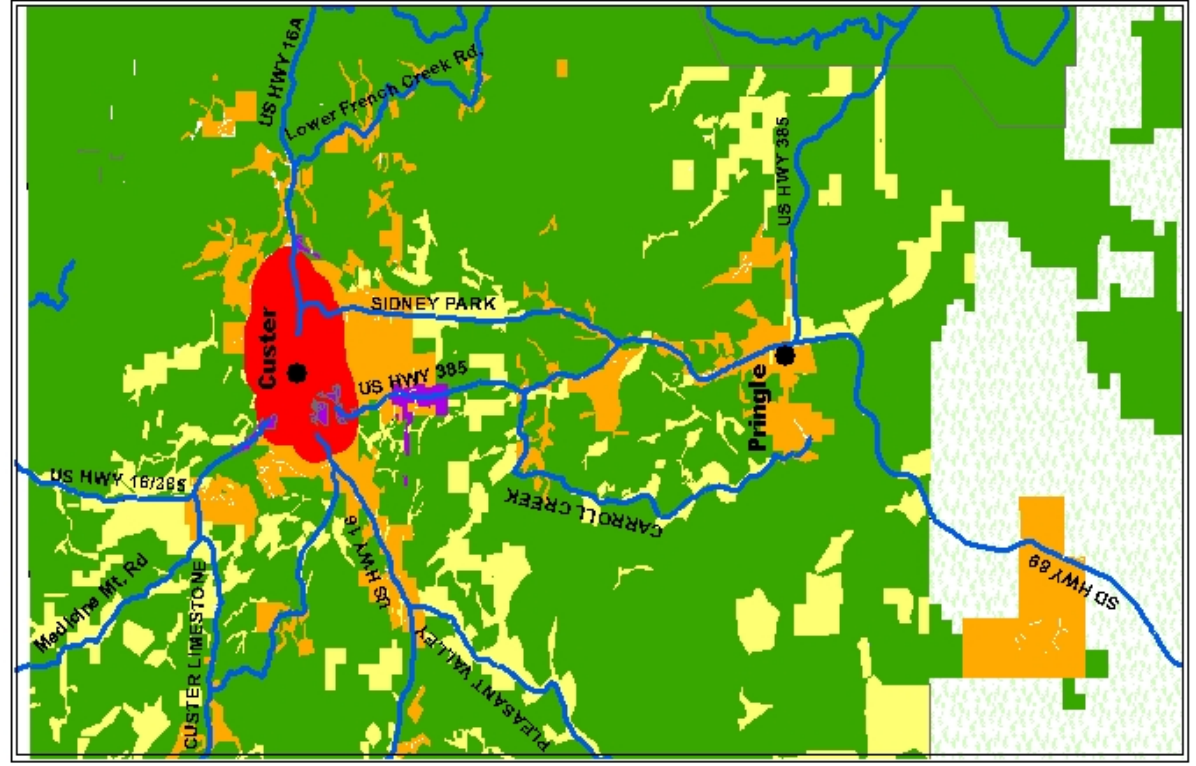
Projected Land Use Area 1



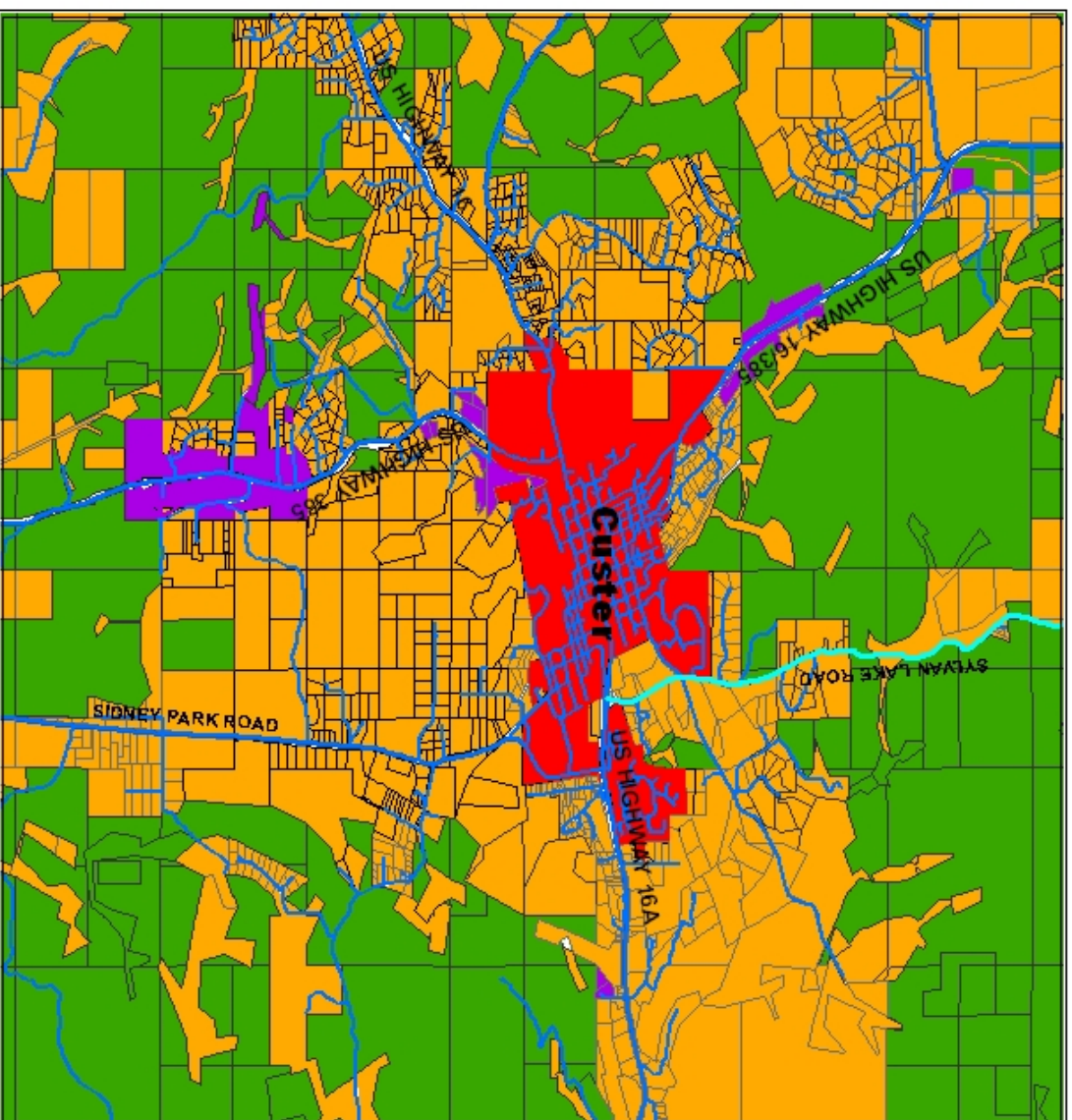
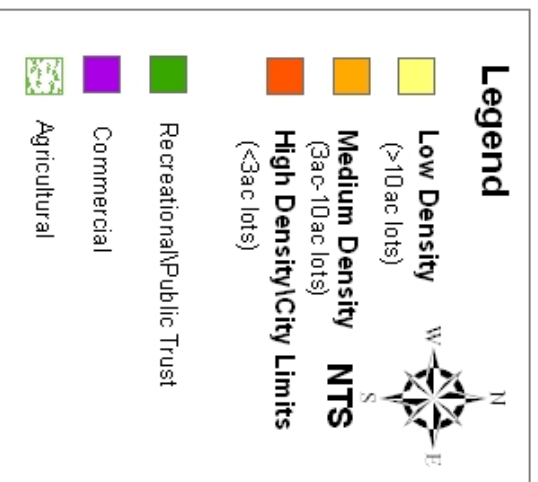
Projected Land Use Area 2



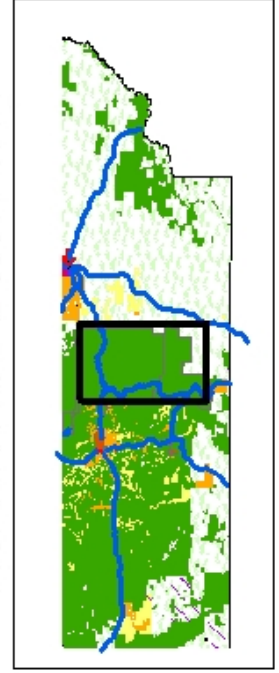
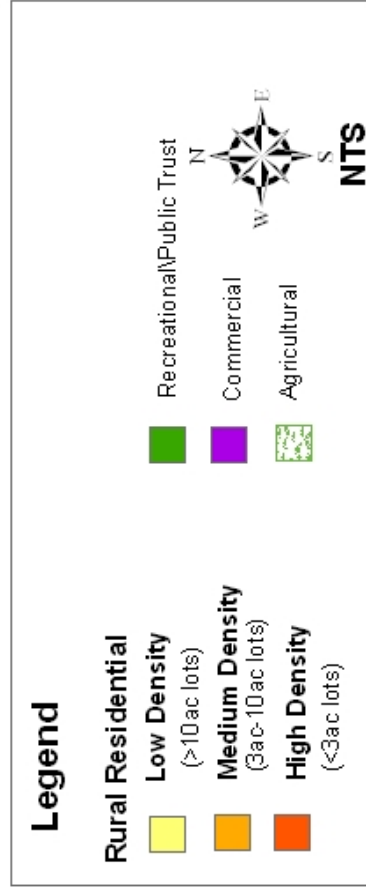
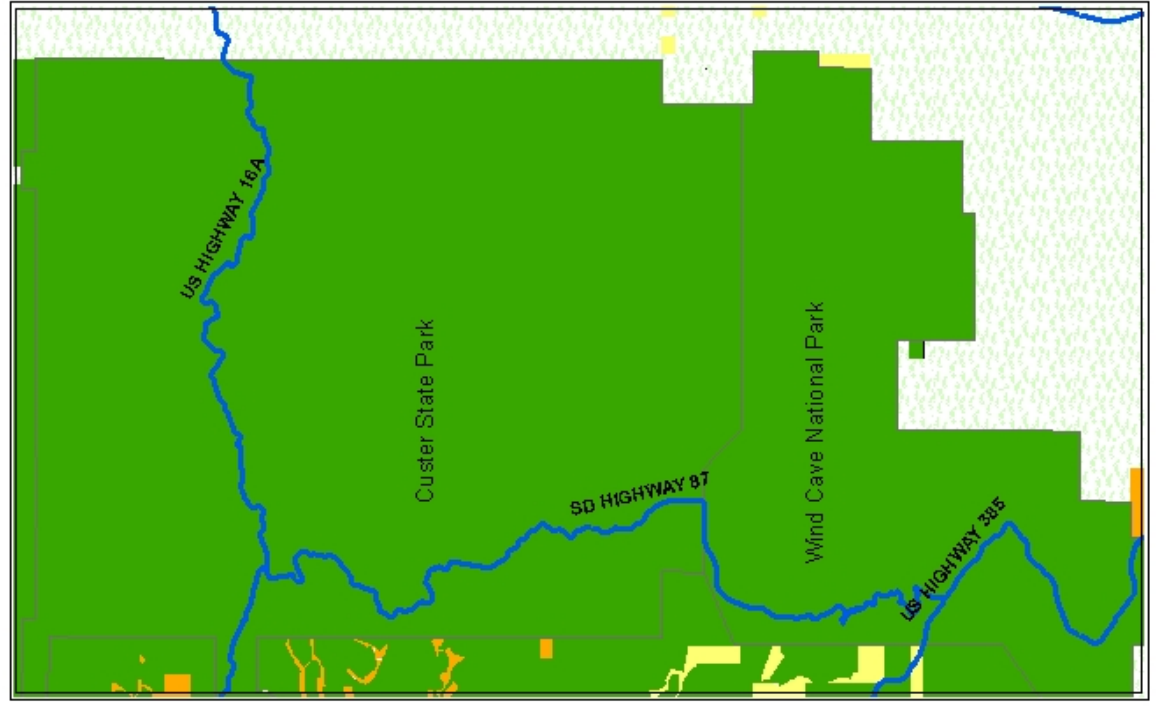
Projected Land Use Area 3



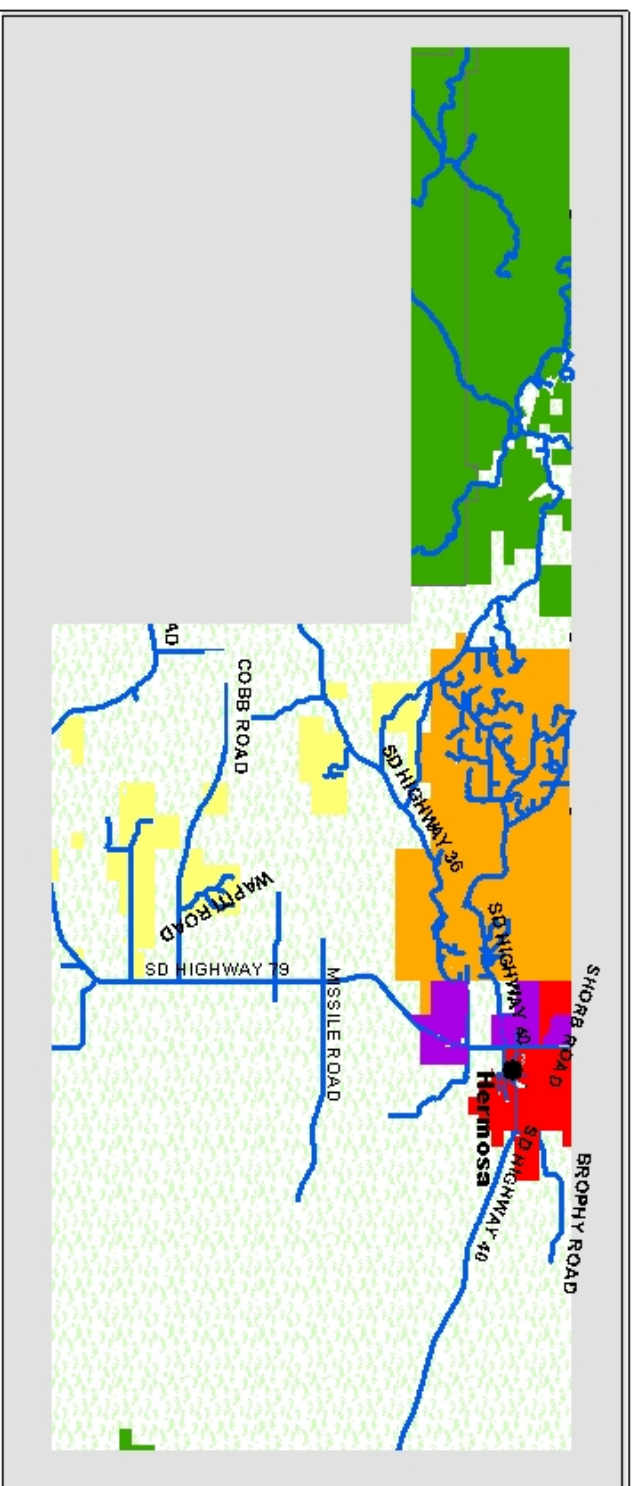
Projected Land Use Custer City & Surrounding



Projected Land Use Area 4



Projected Land Use Area 5



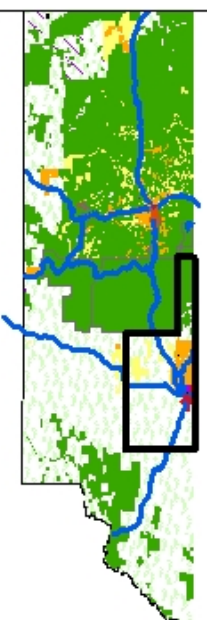
Legend

- Rural Residential**
- Low Density**
(>10ac lots)
 - Medium Density**
(3ac-10ac lots)
 - High Density**
(<3ac lots)

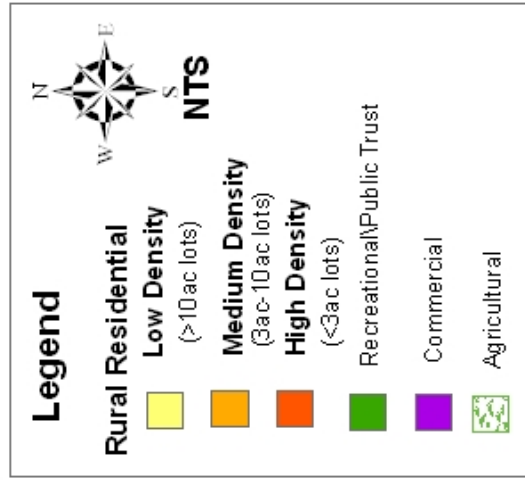
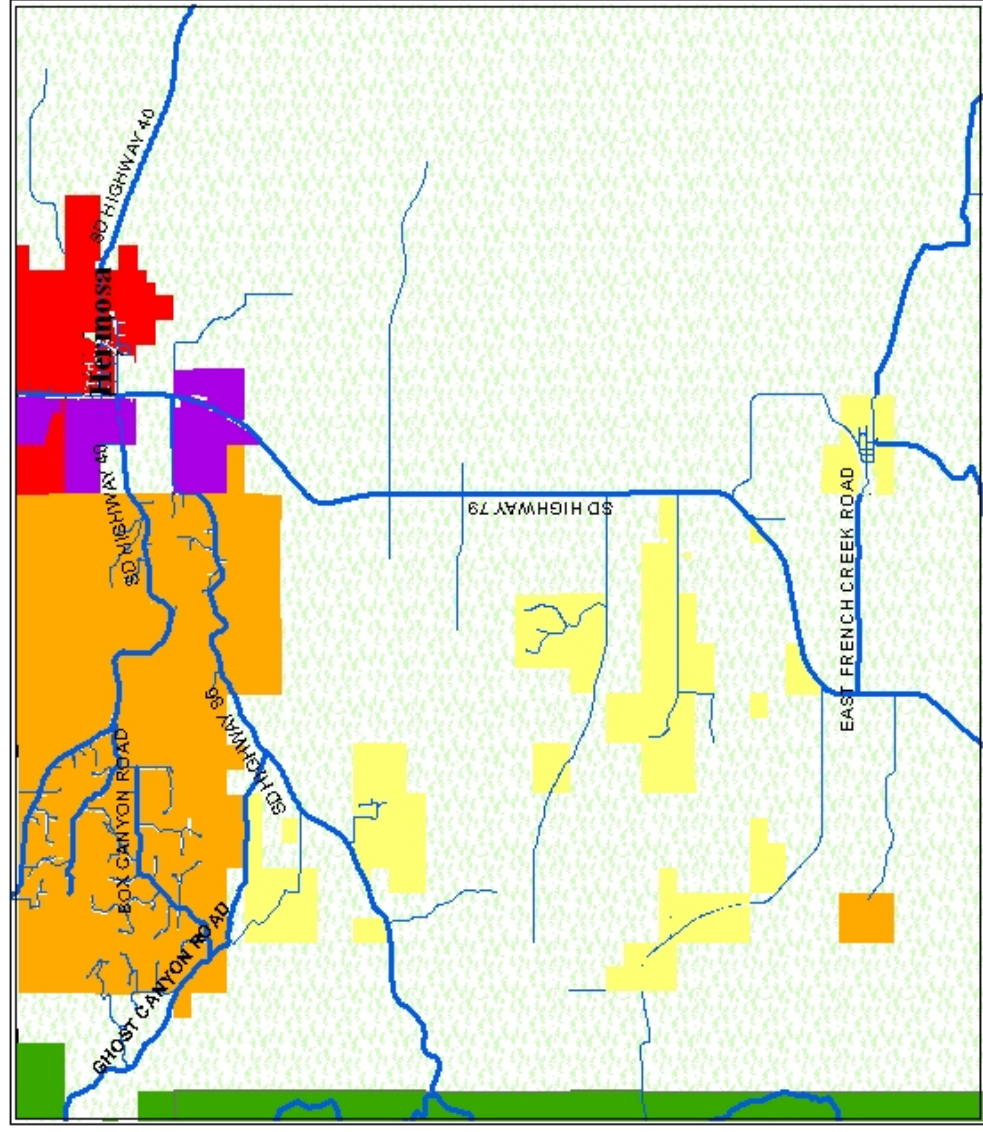
- Recreational/Public Trust**
- Commercial**
- Agricultural**



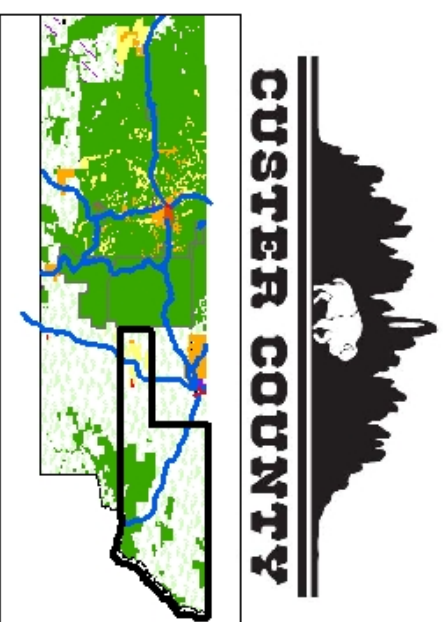
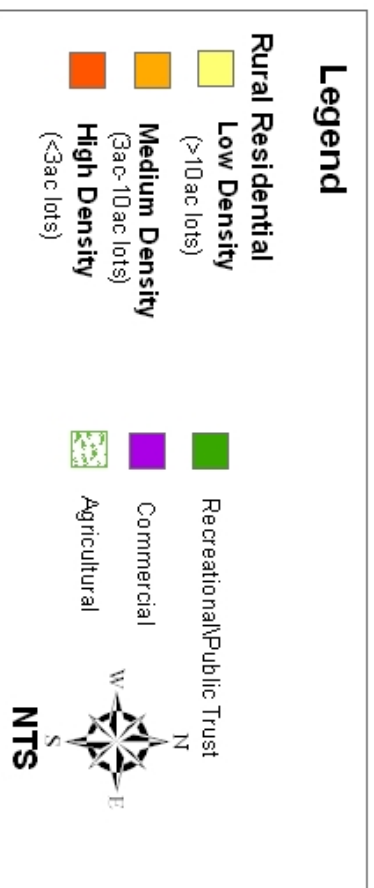
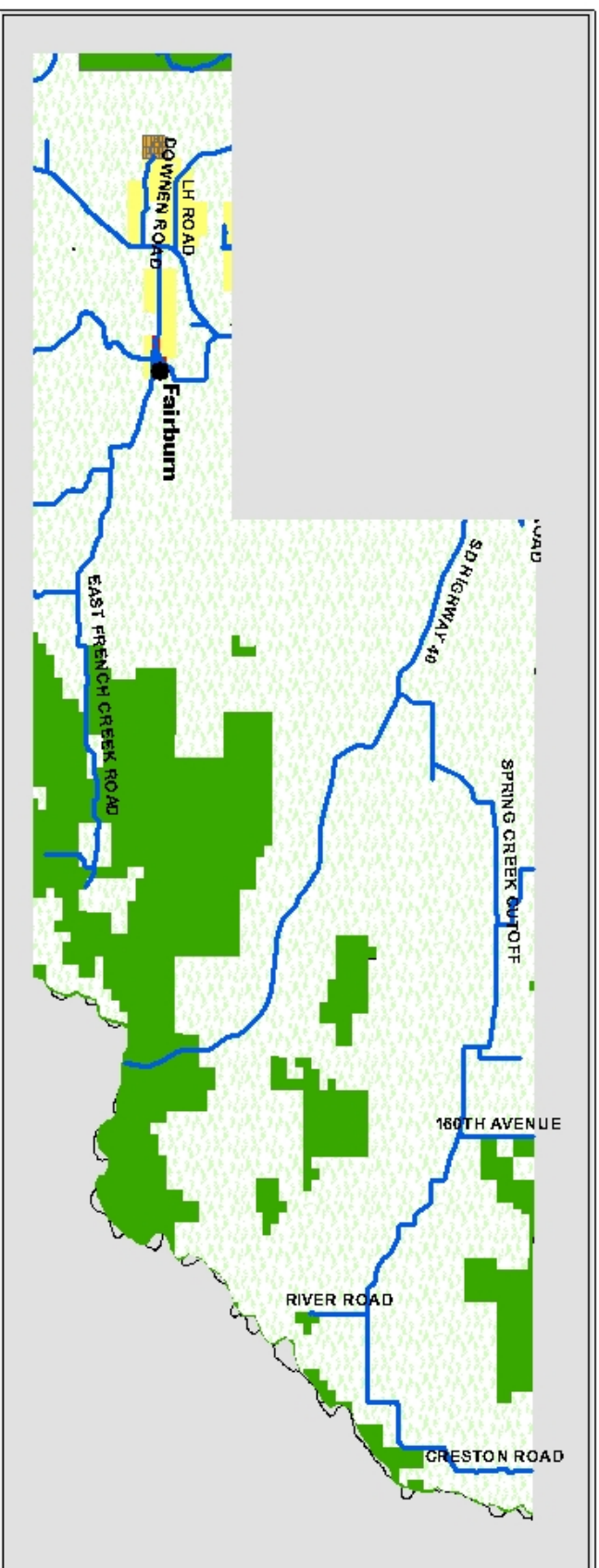
CUSTER COUNTY



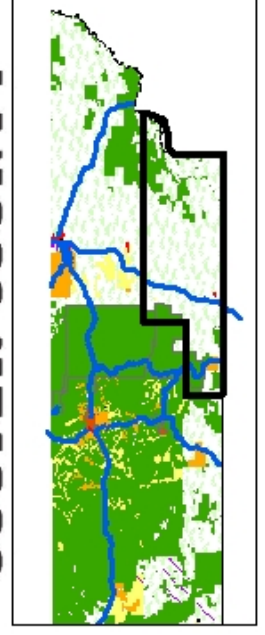
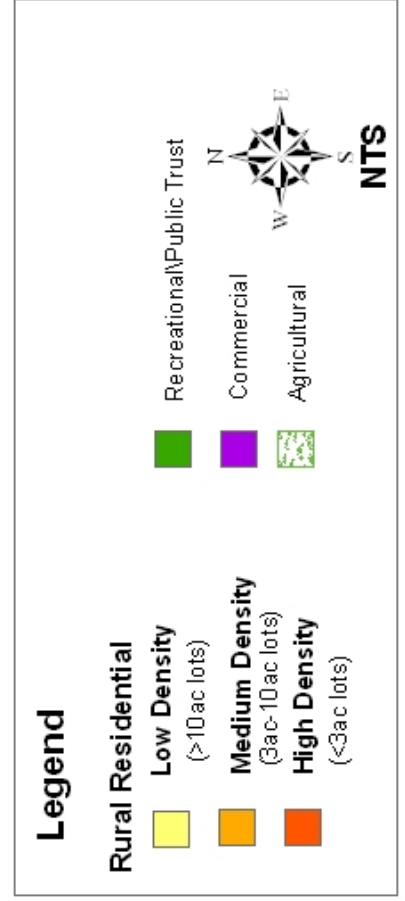
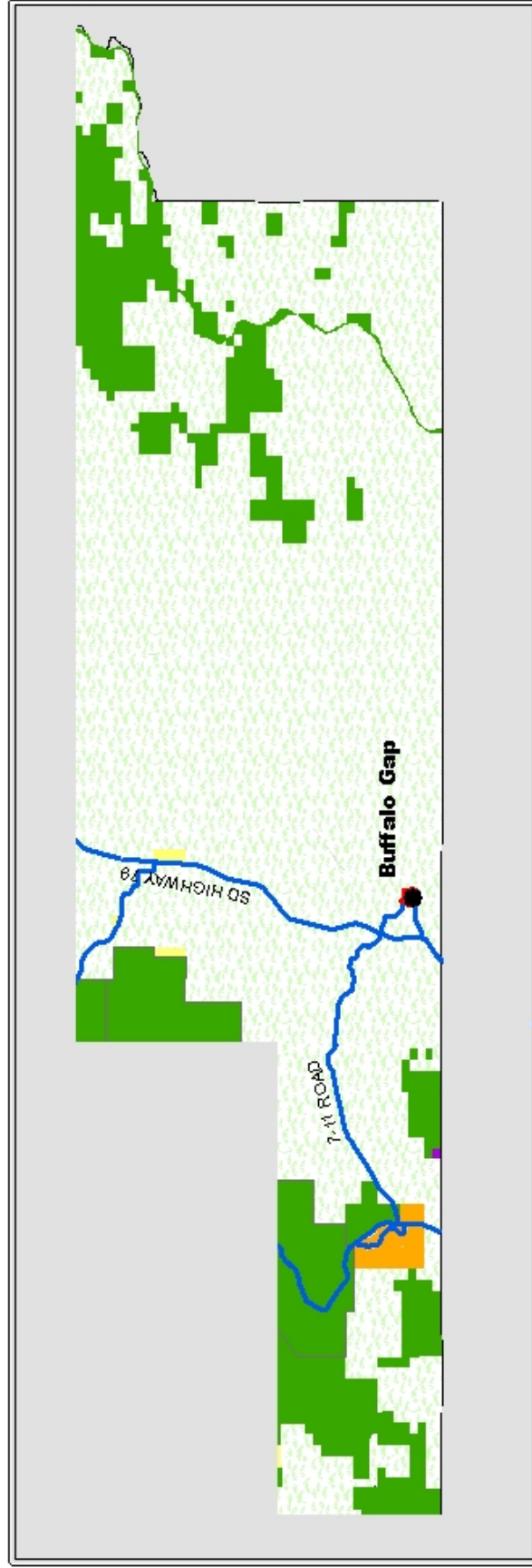
Projected Land Use Hermosa & Surrounding



Projected Land Use Area 6

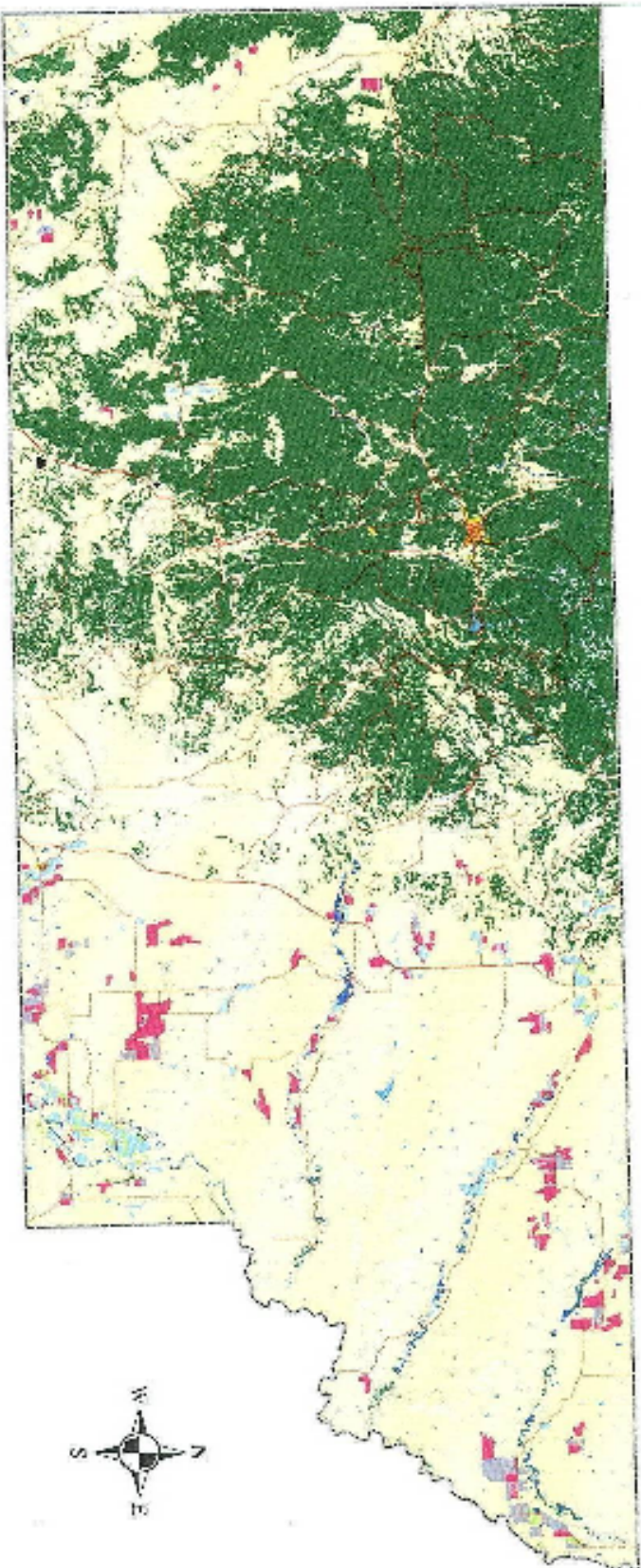


Projected Land Use Area 7



Custer County Vegetation Landcover

Primary Landcover is coniferous pine forest & grassland-pastureland.

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COMMUNITY FACILITIES, SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

GOVERNMENTAL FACILITIES

The County of Custer provides the local citizens with services such as public works, public safety, social services, and administration. The County Courthouse, 420 Mt. Rushmore Road, is where most of the administrative offices are located. The County Commissioners, Planning Commission and other committees conduct meetings at the Courthouse Annex building on 447 Crook Street, which also houses the county library, cooperative extension offices and county nurse.

County Tax Dollars in Action

School district	65-75%
County services	~20%
Special districts	5-10%
(fire, road, library etc.)	

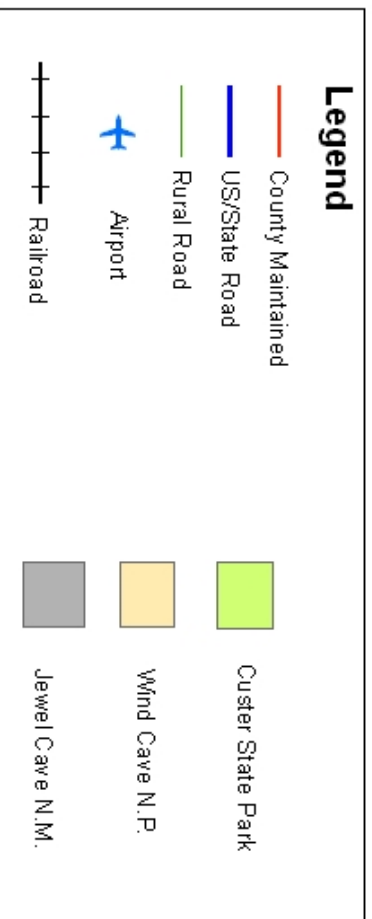
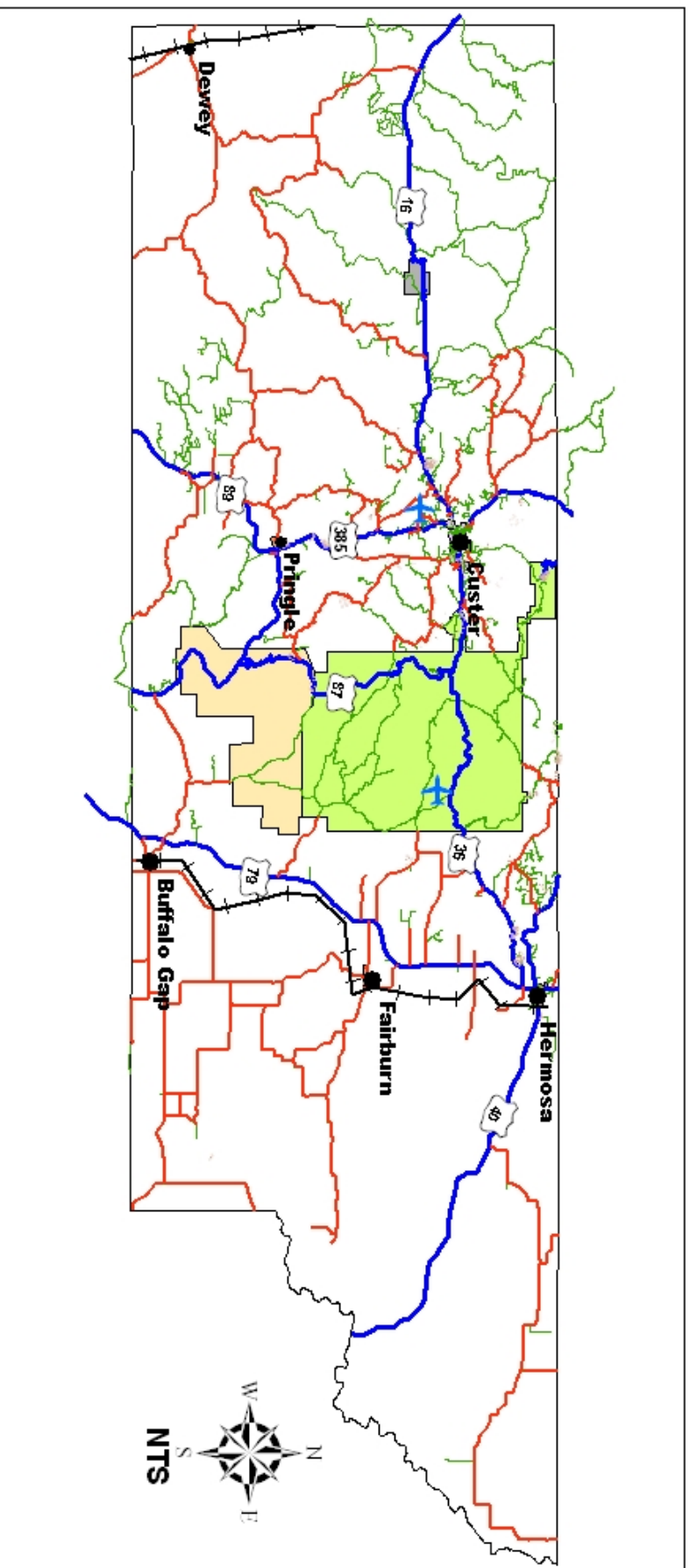
WATER SUPPLY AND PUBLIC SEWER SYSTEM

There is currently no municipal water supply or public sewer system in the unincorporated area of Custer County. County residents have private wells and on-site septic waste disposal systems.

SOLID WASTE SERVICES

There are several private companies that offer waste disposal services in Custer County. Much of the waste generated by county residents is disposed of at Custer/Fall River Regional Waste Management in Edgemont.

Transportation



Health Care



Custer Regional Hospital is located at

1039 Montgomery Street
Custer, SD 57730

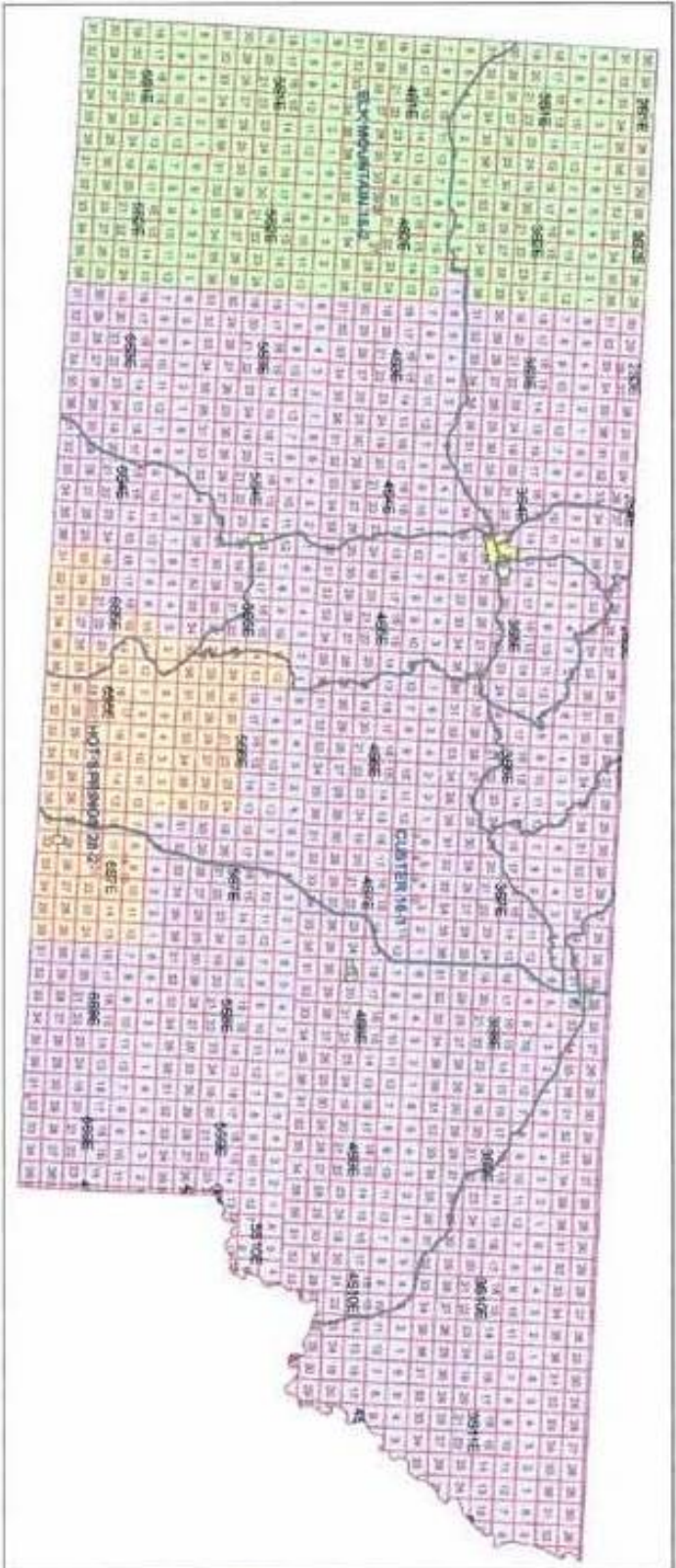
The 16-bed acute care facility has 28 employees including 3 staff physicians

Schools and Colleges

Custer County residents are served by three school districts. Custer, Elk Mountain, and Hot Springs. In addition, there are Custer County residents that attend Rapid City area schools and the Red Shirt Elementary School located in the Shannon County School District. The majority of residents attend the Custer School District, which offers an excellent public education to the youth of the county. The district maintains a graduation rate of nearly 96%. While there are no college campuses located in Custer County, 33% of county residents over the age of 25 have bachelor's degrees. There are several colleges in the Rapid City area that offer opportunities for advanced education, including National American University, Ogala Lakota College, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, and Western Dakota Technical College.



Custer County School Districts



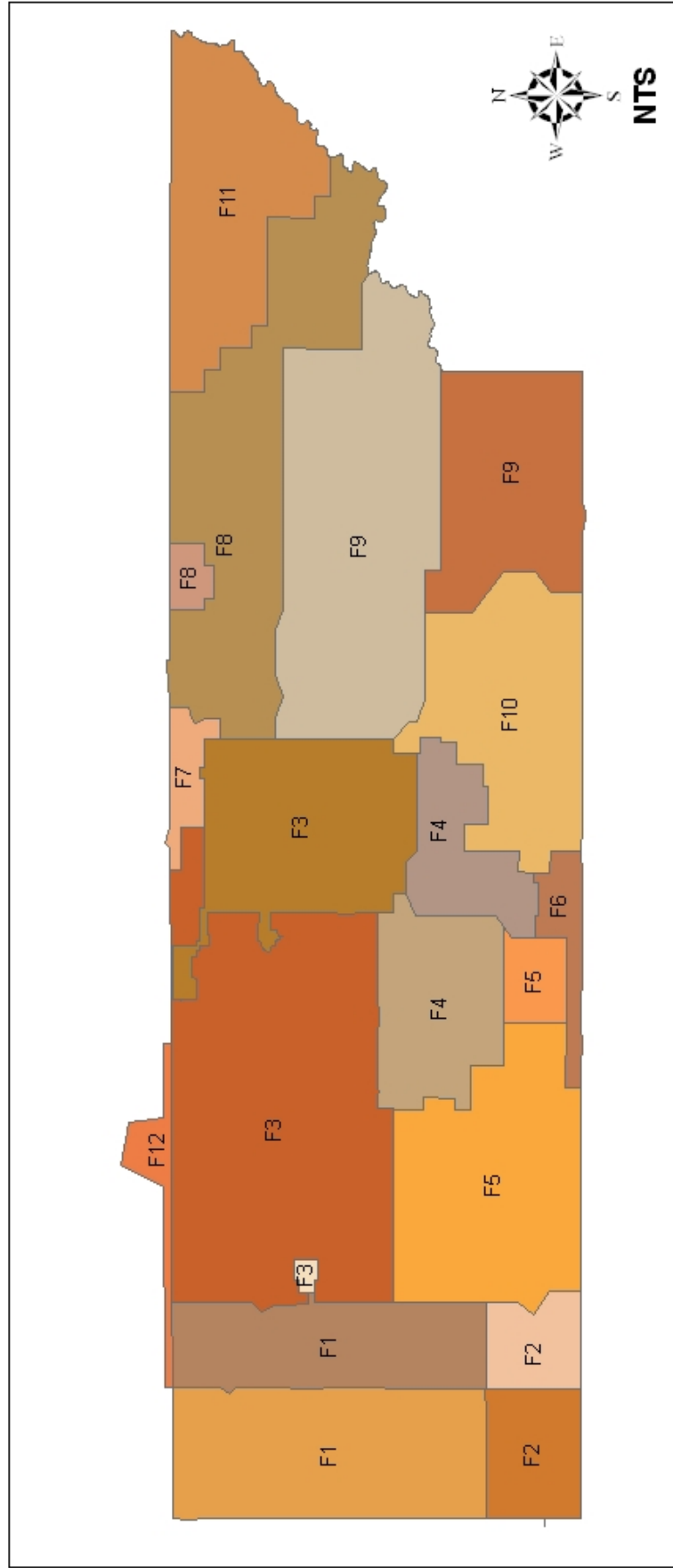
Revised July 2008

School Districts
 CLUSTER 16-1
 BLK MOUNTAIN 16-2
 HOT SPRINGS 20-2



South Dakota
 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
 Learning Leadership Service

Fire Response Areas



<u>FIRE CODE</u>	<u>VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPT.</u>
F1	HIGHLANDS / NEWCASTLE
F2	DEWEY / EDGE MONT
F3	CUSTER
F4	PRINGLE
F5	ARGYLE
F6	HOT SPRINGS

F7	KEYSTONE / HAYWARD
F8	HERMOSA
F9	FAIRBURN
F10	BUFFALO GAP
F11	FOLSOM
F12	HILL CITY





FIRE DEPARTMENTS AND WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION RESOURCES

LOCATION	# OF PERSONNEL
Argyle Volunteer Fire Department	21
Buffalo Gap Volunteer Fire Department	15
Custer Volunteer Fire Department	31
Custer Highlands Volunteer Fire Department	15
Dewey Volunteer Fire Department	10
Fairburn Volunteer Fire Department	15
Hermosa Volunteer Fire Department	22
Pringle Volunteer Fire Department	22



POLICE/SHERIFF DEPARTMENT



The Custer County Sheriff's Department is dedicated to protecting lives and property in our communities, preserving the peace, along with preventing crime and disorder. The men and women of the Sheriff's office maintain the highest professional standards while delivering quality service to County citizens. The Custer County Sheriff's office maintains a strong working relationship with other emergency services in the county such as area volunteer fire departments, area ambulance services, Life Flight, Conservation officers, area Park Rangers, the Hermosa Marshal, US Forest Service, the Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) and the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

The sheriff department administrative facility is located at 31 S 5th Street in Custer.

Department staff and resources

- Sheriff+9 deputies
- 2 Reserve deputies
- 1 administrative
- 13 vehicles

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT



The Custer County Highway Department manages approximately 430 miles of roads. Nearly all of the county roads are gravel surfaced. There are only about eight miles of hard surfaced roads. Those include Playhouse road and portions of Sidney Park, Gumbo Lily, Mineral Drive, Heller and Missile roads. There are some rural subdivisions that have paved roadway that are maintained under private ownership or homeowner associations. The highway department has a main office and garage located at 25365 US Highway 385, with satellite offices located in Buffalo Gap, Elk Mountain, and Hermosa.

Department Staff and Resources

- 16 employees + Superintendent
- 7 Blades (graders)
- 3 Belly Dumps (tractor and trailer)
- 4 end dumps
- 2 mag. water trucks(750 gl/per min.)

AIRPORT



The Custer County Airport (CUP) is located 2 miles SW of the City of Custer on Highway 385. The Airport became officially active in 1969. The airport and its 5500 x 60 foot runway is open to public use.

Ownership: Publicly owned

Owner: Custer County
420 Mt. Rushmore Rd
Custer, SD 57730

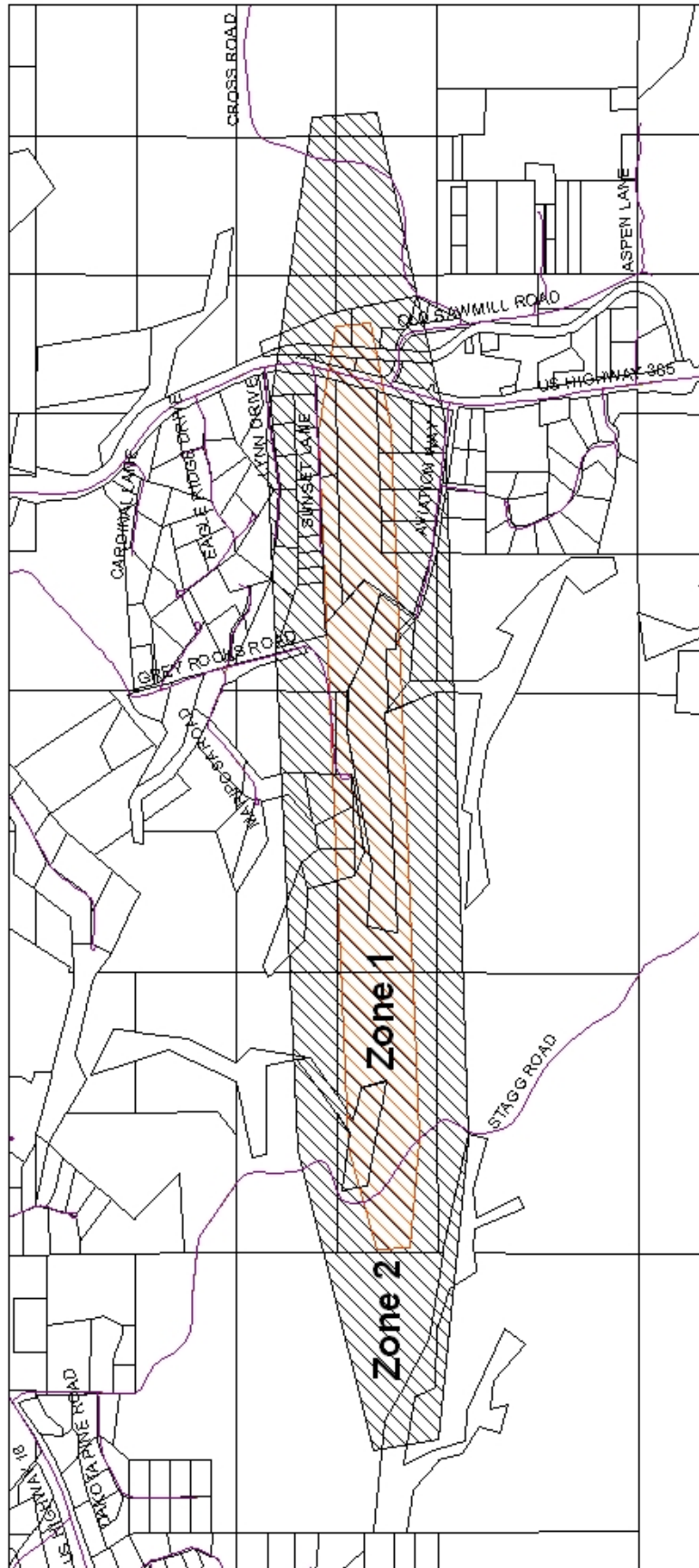
Manager: Brian Madetzke
12202 Aviation Place
Custer, SD

Aircraft based on the field: 15

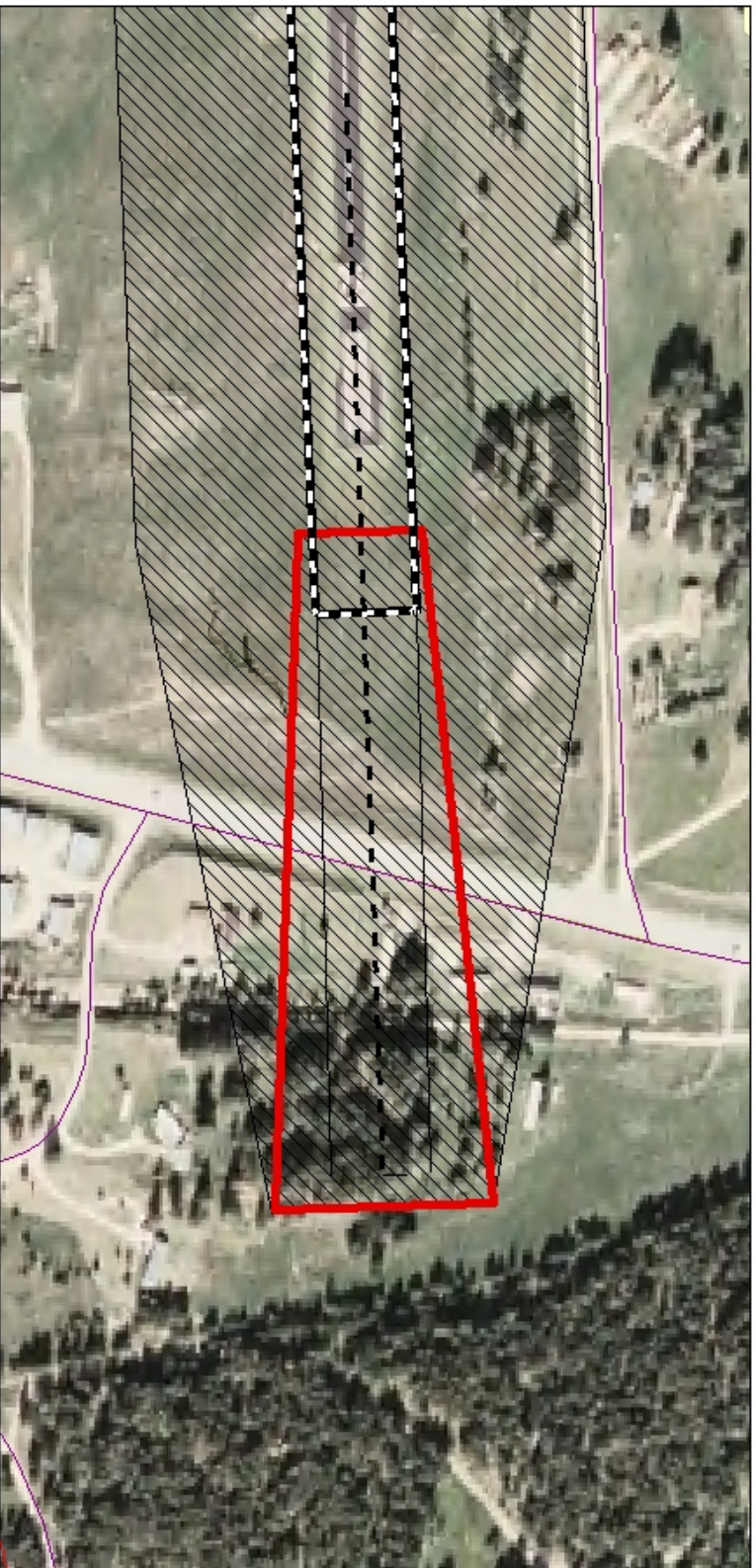
Aircraft operations: avg 136/week
49% transient general aviation
49% local general aviation
1% military



Airport Zones






FAA RPZ Zone



The function of the RPZ is to enhance the protection of people and property. Land use prohibited in the RPZ are residence and places of public assembly.

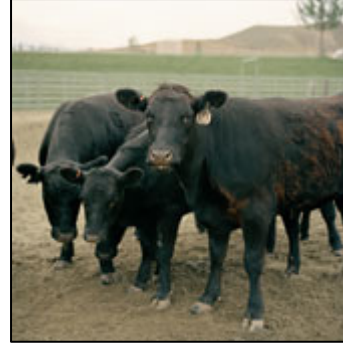
Legend

-  FAA Runway Object Free Area
-  FAA Runway Protection Zone
-  Custer County Safety Zone 1



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Custer County region has long been an area where economic development equated to the use of land and the extraction of its natural resources. From mining to forestry to ranching interests, the land is what sustained the economy. However the natural beauty and recreational resources offered in Custer County have spawned a larger revenue resource in the form of tourism. Millions of visitors come to the Black Hills and Custer County each year to enjoy and participate in the numerous outdoor activities associated with this mountainous region. These include hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, motorcycling, snowmobiling and skiing. The same amenities that are responsible for the tourism trade in the County are also responsible for the most significant

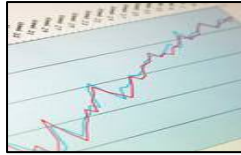


change in land use in Custer County: rural living and retirement housing. Natural resources, favorable climate, recreational opportunities and affordable land have created an atmosphere that invites this type of land use. People retire to areas that offer certain amenities to which they are attracted. This is known as “amenities migration.” The retirement population can be a positive economic development factor, however. They bring with them disposable income and, in some cases, a wealth of technological and business knowledge.

There is still active mining in the County as well as forestry production. There are very few other commercial or industrial uses taking place in the county. The southwest portion of the county is targeted for potential uranium mining as well as limestone extraction for cement production. These operations could employ between 20 to 100 persons when at full capacity. Many residents commute to Wyoming for higher paying employment in the fields of resource extraction, transportation (railroads), construction and other service industries.



REVENUE GENERATION



The following statistics and chart represent spending by visitors for lodging, food and beverage, attractions, and miscellaneous retail items while in Custer County. Custer State Park, Wind Cave National Park, Jewel Cave National Monument and the Crazy Horse Memorial combine to draw millions of visitors each year to the County. This data is provided by the South Dakota Office of Tourism and based upon taxable sales data gathered by the South Dakota Department of Revenue

Tourism

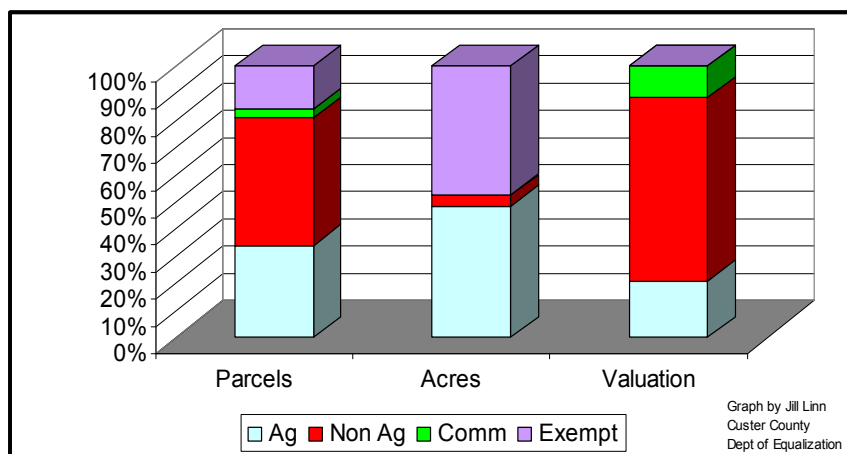
2000	41,151,299	9.4%
2001	39,495,173	-4.0%
2002	43,343,345	9.7%
2003	45,134,744	4.1%
2004	47,749,103	5.8%
2005	50,683,764	6.1%
2006	53,321,962	5.2%
2007	55,520,771	4.1%
	Average Rate	5.0%

Other Sales Tax Generated Revenue:

Returns Filed For Calendar Year 2007

	Gross Sales	Use Sales	Taxable Sales
A Agriculture, Forestry, & Fishing	733,903.98	5,089.45	718,780.51
B Mining	3,930,172.62	786,231.20	1,777,396.91
D Manufacturing	4,644,123.66	121,496.90	344,926.75
E Transportation & Public Utilities	14,041,315.83	552,318.10	12,480,761.84
F Wholesale Trade	3,605,251.37	5,718.59	1,168,481.64
G Retail Trade	66,607,163.74	148,268.29	35,232,224.55
H Finance, Ins, & Real Estate	2,352,342.15	9,911.47	1,681,147.82
I Services	45,167,880.35	899,458.40	32,541,058.23
Total for CUSTER County	141,715,864.55	2,529,035.12	86,515,043.94

Land Valuation/Taxation Proportions



Sources and References

South Dakota Department of Agriculture

South Dakota Crop and Livestock Reporting Service, SDSU

South Dakota Department of Revenue and Regulation

South Dakota Office of Tourism

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

Custer County Living *Prepared and Distributed by Custer Conservation District & Custer County Weed & Pest*

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