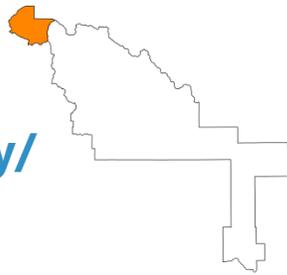


*Photo credit - Carol Waller 2014*

## Sawtooth City/ Smiley Creek



### Location and Context

The Sawtooth City/Smiley Creek area is known and loved by the residents and many other Idahoans. The iconic Smiley Creek Lodge has operated for over 65 years, creating a natural destination for northbound travelers as they enter the Sawtooth Valley over Galena Summit. The view of the Sawtooth Mountains from the Galena overlook is unparalleled in scenic beauty. Beyond Blaine County's northernmost boundary lies Custer County, with Redfish Lake and many other tourist destinations in and around the town of Stanley.

In 1972, much of this portion of Blaine County became part of the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (Sawtooth NRA), which was created with a goal of preserving the area's outstanding natural, scenic, historic, pastoral and fish and wildlife values.

The subarea is remote from Blaine County's cities and services. Due to its location and its harsh winters, there are very few fulltime residents. Most of the residents live in Sawtooth City, an unincorporated village surrounding the Smiley Creek Lodge.

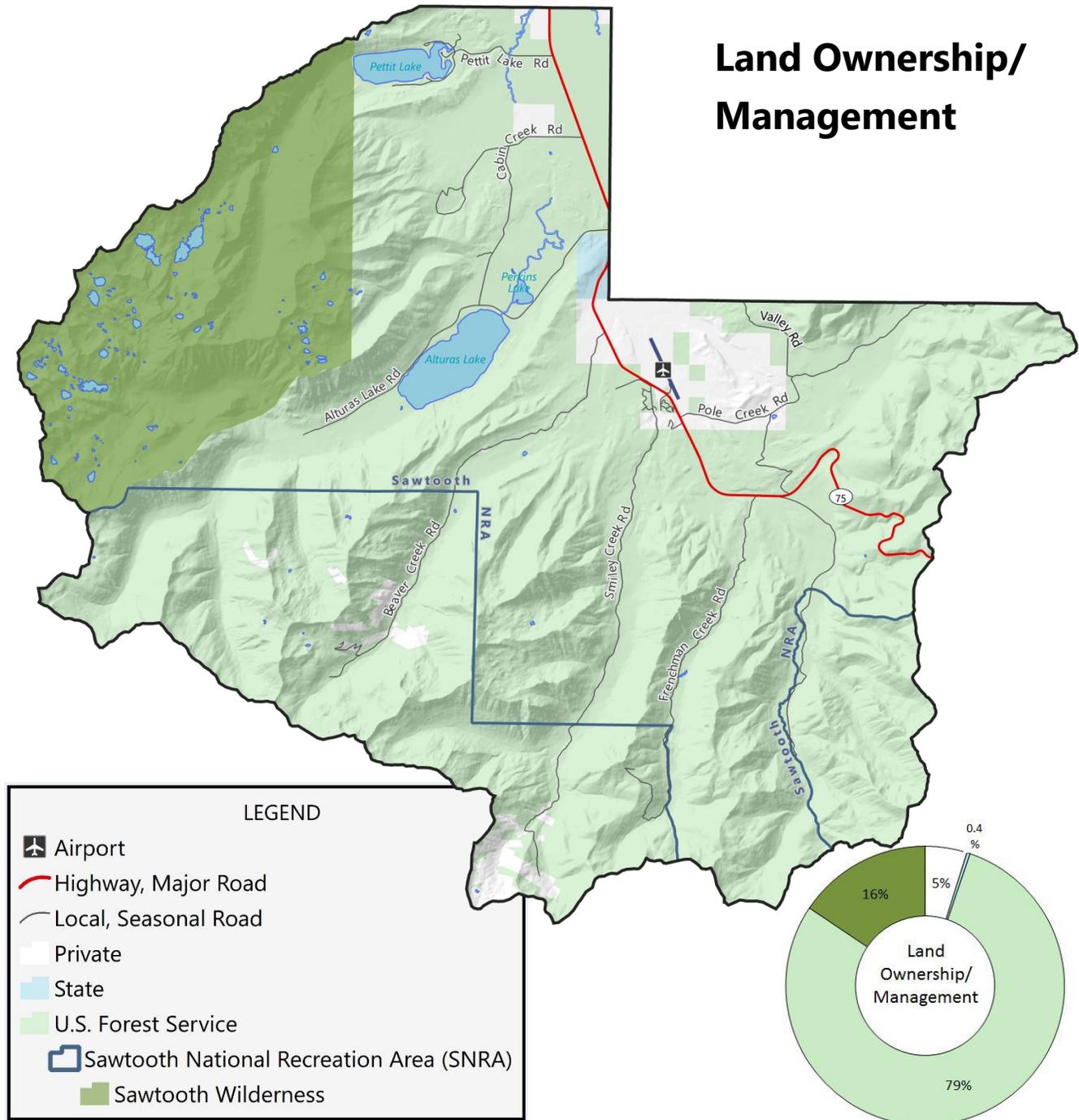
Sawtooth City gets its name from the historic mining townsite out Beaver Creek Road, which is designated on the National Register of Historic Places. From a peak population of 600, the town was abandoned in 1888. Little visible sign remains of this historic settlement.

## Land Use Characteristics

### Ownership

As shown in the pie-chart approximately 95% of the land is federal. Over 79,000 acres are under the jurisdiction of the US Forest Service (USFS). Approximately 63,000 of those are within the Sawtooth NRA (also referred to as the SNRA) and

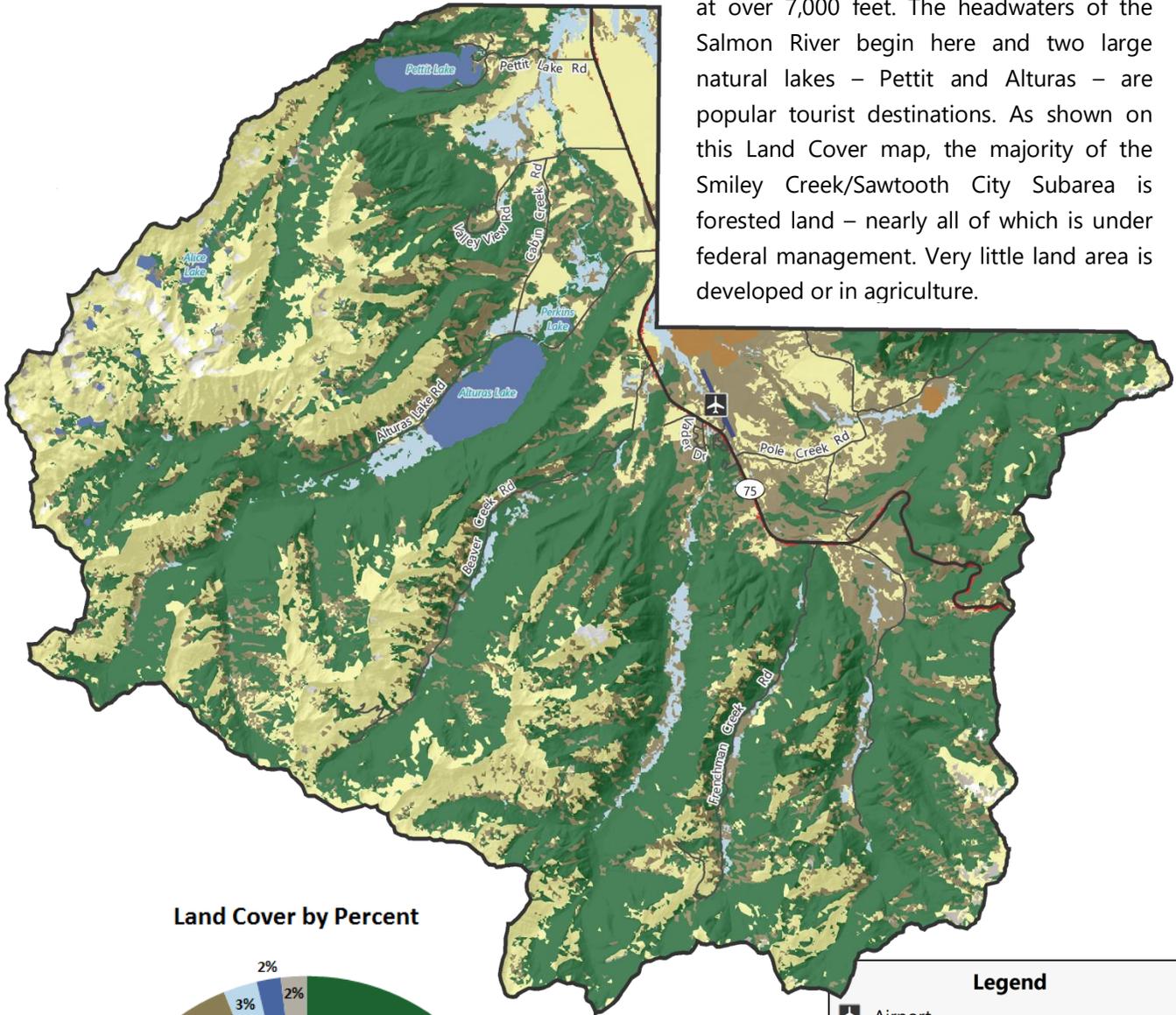
13,300 are within the Sawtooth Wilderness Area (part of the Sawtooth NRA). Approximately 1425 acres within the USFS lands are designated as "Historic Water": Alturas, Perkins, Pettit, Alice and Twin Lakes. Only approximately 4,150 acres of the subarea are privately held. There are roughly 200 private parcels, including multiple mining claims comprising just over 1000 acres. Most of the developed parcels are in Sawtooth City.



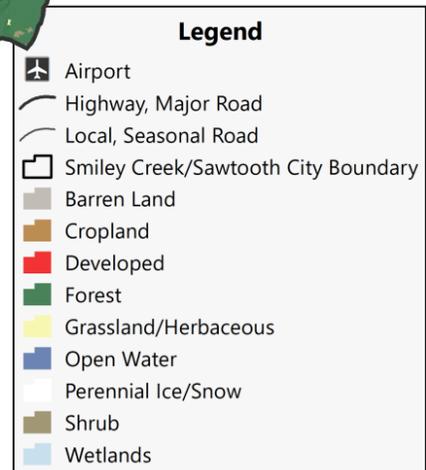
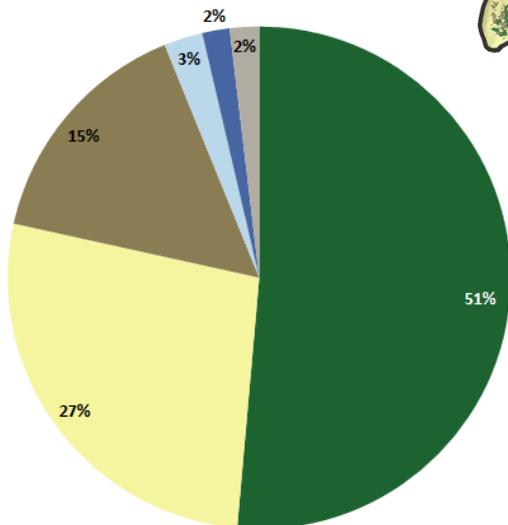
# Land Cover

## Land Cover

This subarea spans high peaks at Galena summit down to the alpine Sawtooth Valley at over 7,000 feet. The headwaters of the Salmon River begin here and two large natural lakes – Pettit and Alturas – are popular tourist destinations. As shown on this Land Cover map, the majority of the Smiley Creek/Sawtooth City Subarea is forested land – nearly all of which is under federal management. Very little land area is developed or in agriculture.



Land Cover by Percent



Source: USGS, National Land Cover Database, 2011

## Existing Land Uses

Very little development exists in the subarea. Sawtooth City is comprised of 94 lots in Smiley Creek Subdivisions #1 through #5, and 11 unsubdivided tax lots. There are 70 existing dwellings, but only approximately 25 people live in Sawtooth City year-round. Less than a dozen other dwelling units are scattered on private property on the valley floor or in drainages leading to federal land. As of 2017, there are 23 summer cabins on leased USFS land along the shores of Pettit Lake and 34 along Valley View Road.

Most commercial activity is limited to the Smiley Creek Lodge, which is open year-round with the exception of limited spring closures. The Lodge contains a store and restaurant, and lodging in the form of cabins and an RV park. The Beaver Creek Store and cabins, a mile north of the lodge, has been open to the public between Memorial Day and Labor Day, with the store open on weekends.

Smiley Creek Airport is a publicly-managed seasonal grass landing strip<sup>1</sup> located directly east across Highway 75 from the Lodge. The airport is a popular destination for small aircraft, and the lodge hosts numerous fly-in events annually.

A Transfer Station consisting of trash and recycling stations and RV fresh water and wastewater disposal is located directly across from the Smiley Creek Lodge. The Transfer Station is under joint management between Blaine County and the Sawtooth NRA, and is available for both local and tourist use.

Seasonal ranching and grazing of both sheep and cattle take place on the valley floor and in certain drainages on federal lands under grazing permits.

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<sup>1</sup> The airport is on private land within the Sawtooth NRA, with an easement to the Idaho Transportation Department for the management



*Photo credit - Carol Waller 2014*

## Regulations

Land use regulations in the Sawtooth City/Smiley Creek subarea are best understood by first explaining the Sawtooth NRA designations and regulations.

### Sawtooth NRA Regulations

The Sawtooth NRA was created by Congress in 1972. The enactment of the Sawtooth NRA recognized the existing private lots and homes in Sawtooth City as a “Designated Community”. This means that Blaine County and the Sawtooth NRA have “dual” jurisdiction over the community, in that the Sawtooth Area Ranger works with Blaine County to implement ordinances guiding development and uses to be consistent with the purposes of the Sawtooth NRA.

The remaining private land outside the “Designated Community” but still within the Sawtooth NRA boundary is designated as “Agricultural,” “Commercial” or “Residential.” The vast majority is designated as Agricultural. A very small area at the Beaver Creek Store has the Commercial designation, and a few small areas are designated Residential. Within each of these designations, uses are limited and structures and other development must meet certain standards. The Sawtooth NRA also holds conservation easements on several of the privately owned parcels outside Sawtooth City. Each easement specifies the development allowed. Overall, these easements limit significantly the allowable number

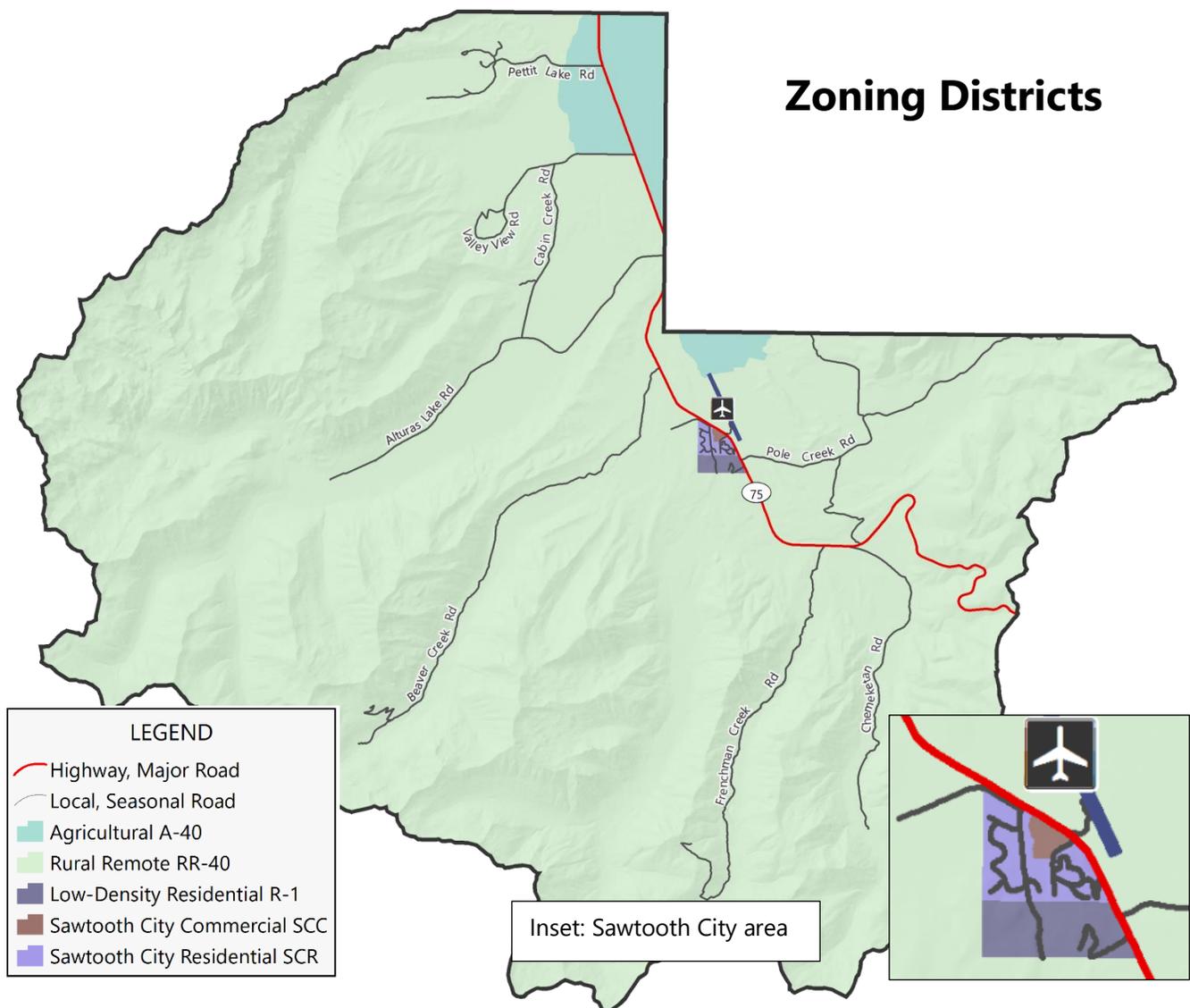
of dwellings in the subarea, as seen in the buildout analysis.

### Blaine County Regulations

The 1995 Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map does not show any lands north of Galena Summit. It is therefore assumed that the entire subarea falls into that Plan's "Productive Agriculture/Rural Remote" land use designation. The subarea is zoned primarily Rural Remote (RR-40) with some areas of Productive Agriculture (A-40) on the valley floor. Sawtooth City is zoned both Sawtooth City Commercial (SCC) and Sawtooth City Residential (SCR-4). Just south of the designated community of Sawtooth City is a small area of Low Density Residential (R-1). The zoning classifications are shown on the Zoning Districts map on this page.

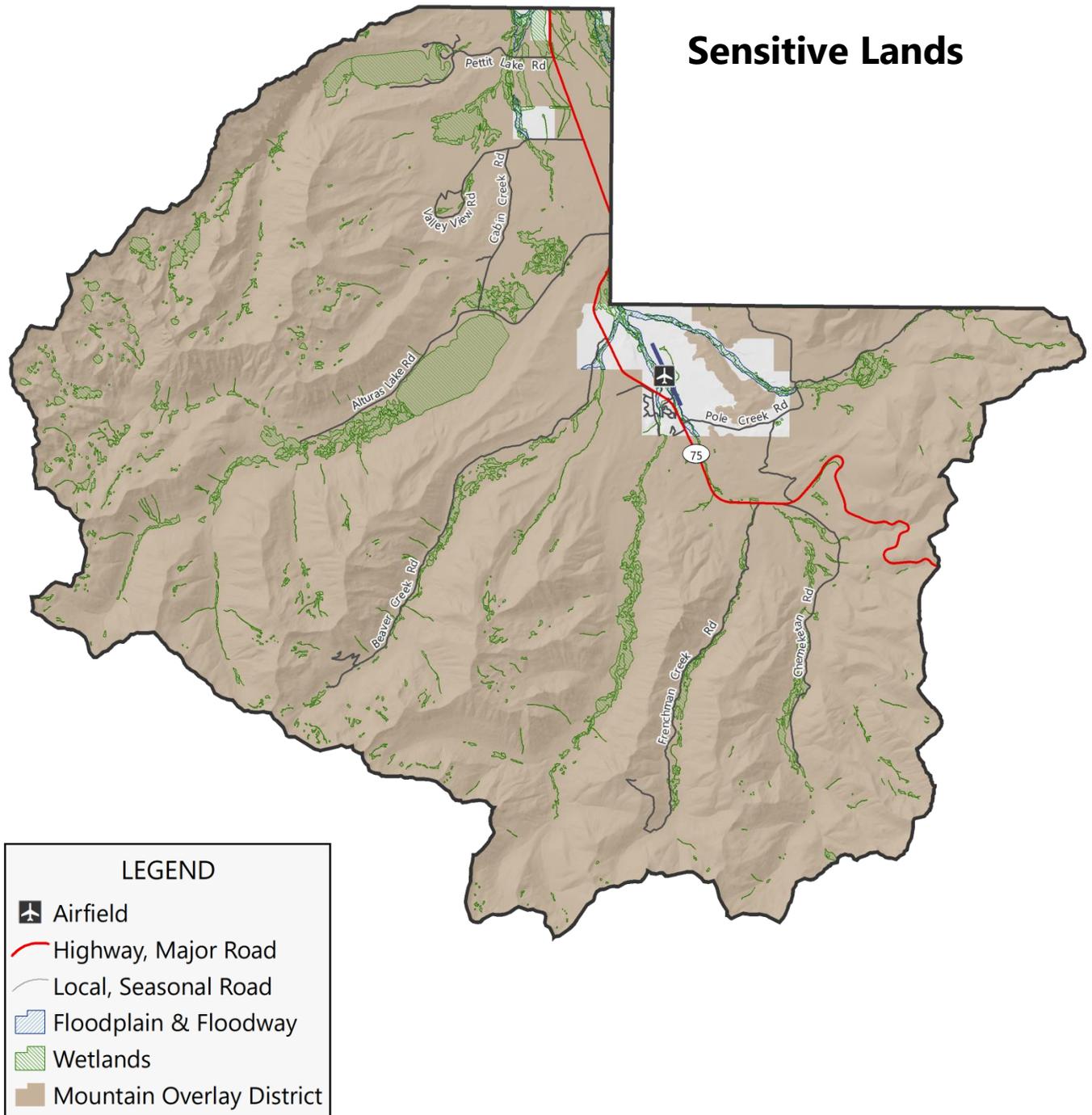
Zoning regulations for the two Sawtooth City zoning districts are intended to directly reflect the standards of the Sawtooth NRA for the designated community. The Sawtooth NRA regulations seek to balance the goals of the scenic corridor with private property uses. As such, they contain specific provisions that differ from most of Blaine County, including requirements for:

- Maintenance of buildings and properties
- Minimum house size
- Maximum lot coverage
- Number and size of outbuildings
- Architectural compatibility and materials
- Maximum driveway width and surface materials



The majority of land in the subarea is within the Mountain Overlay District (MOD), which reduces the developable density to one unit per 160 acres. All private development within the MOD, floodplain and wetlands is regulated. These development constraints are shown on the Sensitive Lands map on this page.

## Sensitive Lands



## Buildout Analysis

To create this analysis, the GIS Department utilized zoning and other informational layers. The Smiley Creek subarea is unique in that the Sawtooth NRA holds easements on all the private lands within its boundaries, except those in the Designated Community of Sawtooth City. In Sawtooth City, zoning regulations prohibit further subdivision. These constraints have been incorporated into the subarea’s buildout analysis, shown below:

Individual parcels with the greatest residential development potential include a 35-acre lot zoned R-1 adjacent to Sawtooth City. A 9.4-acre parcel zoned for commercial uses (SCC) in Sawtooth City currently has a single family residence. No development plans are known for these parcels. Any proposals outside Sawtooth City would be subject to Sawtooth NRA review as well as applicable Blaine County processes.

Sawtooth City/Smiley Creek Study Parcels*				25% Slope Decrease Units	Sawtooth NRA Easement Decrease Units	SCC/SCR Regulations Decrease Units	Buildout Potential Units	Existing Units	Remaining Potential Units
Zone	Acres	Divider	Units						
A-40	616.61	40.0	15	0	8		7	0	7
R-1	101.37	1.0	101	0	59		42	5	37
RR-40	3,352.92	40.0	84	19	33		32	7	**25
SCC***	13.46	0.4	n/a	n/a	n/a	no resub	2	2	0
SCR.4	80.59	0.4	n/a	n/a	n/a	no resub	103	70	33
Totals	4,164.95		--	19	100		187	84	103

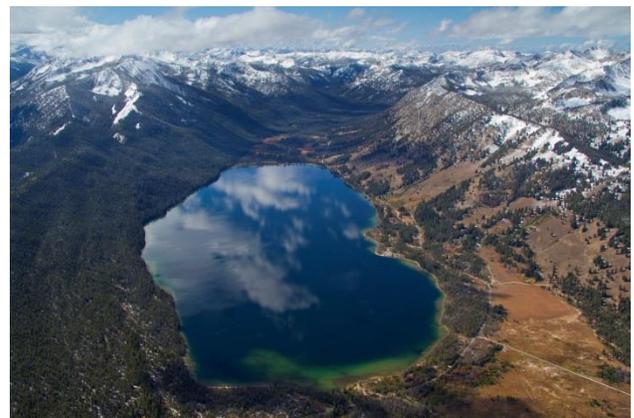
\* Does not include public lands.

\*\*Many parcels in RR-40 are patented mining claims. Development potential is also limited by access and availability of services.

\*\*\*Additional commercial square footage may be possible but has not been fully analyzed.

## Land Use Map

The proposed land use classification map includes the Community Townsite designation for Sawtooth City and the nearby commercial area at the old Beaver Creek store. A small area of irrigated land just north of the airstrip is designated Productive Agriculture. The majority of the privately owned parcels, both on the valley floor and the remote inholdings (patented mining claims), are designated as Rural and Remote. The vast majority of the land in this subarea is public land, designated as Resource Conservation on the Land Use Map. (See Land Use Map on next page.)



Land Use Map – see following page



*Photo credit – Carol Waller*

## Issues and Opportunities

### Community Input

A kickoff stakeholder meeting was held in June 2017 with about a dozen community members. This meeting helped to inform the discussion topics for the online survey and the community meeting. The online survey was launched on July 13, 2017, and remained open until September 1, 2017. The community meeting was conducted on August 11, 2017 at the Smiley Creek Rural Fire Protection District Station. Approximately 26 citizens attended the meeting – a mix of full-time, part-time and business owners.

The complete online survey results are found in the appendix, and certain key results are noted in this Issues and Opportunities section. The vast majority (92%) of the survey-takers live at least part-time in the subarea, and have done so for at least 5 years. Respondents said that they most valued the area's natural beauty, their rural landscape and access to outdoor recreation, birds and wildlife and surrounding forests. The sense of community and the Sawtooth NRA's Designated Community status also scored very highly. Changes in their neighborhood that respondents were most proud of included the formation of the fire department, the clearing of snow from Sawtooth City roads in winter, the opening of the recycling center, and a growing

sense of community. Changes that concerned them the most included unsightly clutter, more motorized vehicle use and speeding, a variety of issues related to the Sawtooth NRA including condition of the forest and trails. Both the online survey results and input at the on-site meetings are reflected in the issues and opportunities listed below.

### Tourism and Recreation

Tourism and recreation are and will continue to be the primary economic drivers for this subarea. Sawtooth City residents recognize the value of tourism in their community and the entire Sawtooth Valley, while also acknowledging the impacts on their peace and quiet. Tourism supports the Smiley Creek Lodge, which residents feel is an asset to their neighborhood. At the same time, tourism can cause road congestion, increased traffic speeds and increased use of public lands. Sawtooth City residents note increased Off Road Vehicle (ORV) use on the roads in town as well as nearby trails.

Many ORV (ATV, motorbike, etc.) users choose to ride their off road vehicles to the Lodge from camping areas such as Pole Creek, Beaver Creek, Alturas and Frenchman's, leaving their passenger vehicles at their campsite. There is no legal way to travel by ORV from surrounding camping areas to the Smiley Creek Lodge. The often-used dirt path adjacent to highway 75 is not a legal ORV route. Community dialogue over the pros and cons of a designated ORV route from nearby camp areas to the Lodge is needed.

The need for public restrooms in the vicinity of Sawtooth City has also been identified. The Forest Service removed the public restrooms at Galena Summit due to high elevations causing long-term maintenance difficulties. As a result, Smiley Creek Lodge has noted a significant increase in tourists stopping merely to use the restroom. The closest public restrooms are the Alturas/Petit Campgrounds 6 to 8 miles to the northwest, and the Stanley Ranger Station 23 miles to the north. Restrooms should be considered as part of a long-term plan for

the area. Possible locations include the Transfer Station across the highway from the Lodge and at the Smiley Creek Airport.

### Smiley Creek Lodge

Smiley Creek Lodge has operated since the early 1950's, and retains the character and scale of the era. The restaurant, store, RV Park and lodging provide a base for summer and winter outdoor activities. In the winter, the Lodge is a key snowmobile hub for the Stanley Basin and surrounding area.

Sawtooth City residents overwhelmingly recognize Smiley Creek Lodge as an asset. As the only commercial outpost for 25 miles, the Lodge is a regional tourist draw. Its owner has noted the following issues:

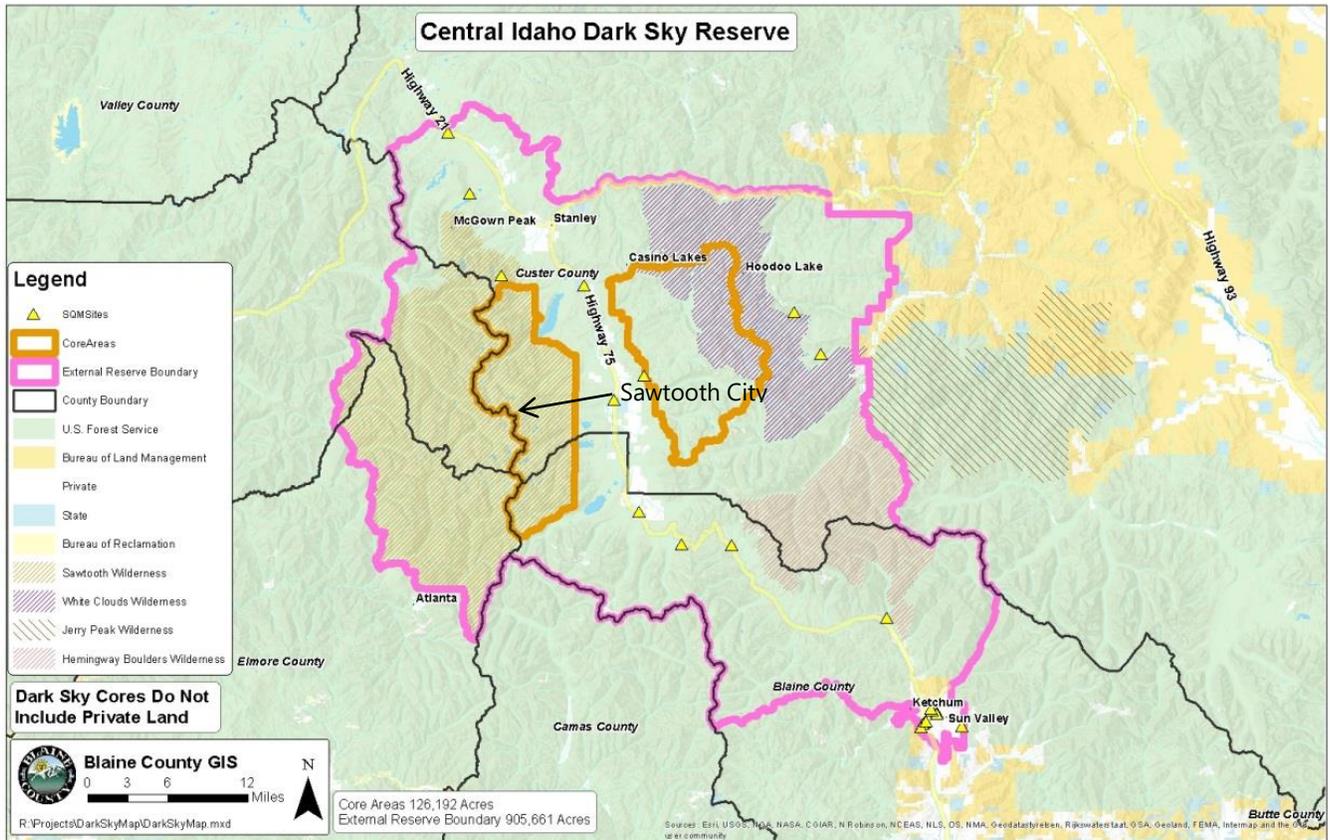
1. Strong need for employee housing. The Lodge property has limited land area available due to constraints from existing water courses and drain field. Additional employee housing in the general area is a high priority to keep the business viable. Various options were explored as part of the online survey, with a variety of opinions about how best to address the need. Most were generally open to considering new options. See responses in the Appendix.
2. As noted above, Smiley Creek Lodge has experienced a significant increase in restroom use since those at Galena Summit were closed. The existing drain field at Smiley Creek Lodge is being impacted by this additional use.
3. ORV travel to and from Lodge has implications for the Lodge as well as the community at large.



## Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve

The Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve is America’s first International Dark Sky Reserve, one of only twelve worldwide. Designated by the International Dark Sky Association in December 2017, following a collaborative effort of community members, land owners and public land managers, the Reserve recognizes the exceptional night sky brilliance and community commitment to minimizing artificial light pollution. The Reserve encompasses portions of

Blaine and Custer counties including the communities of Ketchum, Sun Valley, Smiley Creek and Stanley as well as the surrounding Sawtooth NRA and adjacent wilderness areas. The County’s outdoor lighting regulations, adopted in 2010, were instrumental in the designation of the Reserve. Dealing with the impacts of additional tourism that may result from the Dark Sky Reserve designation may pose a challenge for the USFS and the communities within it.



## Sawtooth NRA and Blaine County regulations

Sawtooth City is a Sawtooth NRA “Designated Community” with the following definition: “A populated area divided into lots, blocks and streets, as platted and recorded in the official records of the county, containing residences and commercial establishments, providing goods and services, and retaining the atmosphere of a western frontier ranch-type town and so classified in 36 CFR Sec.292.15(a).”

Most residents feel the Sawtooth NRA Designated Community rules reinforce the values of their rural lifestyle. These values include: “Doesn’t look like Wood River Valley,” “Protection of environment,” “We have more freedom than in other areas of the Sawtooth NRA” and “We have someone to contact with our concerns.” The following concerns regarding Sawtooth NRA and/or Blaine County regulations within Sawtooth City were noted:

Defensible Space. County regulations only allow for tree clearing within the dimensions of building foundations plus an eight-foot wide work area. Firewise landscaping standards recommend a 30-foot setback around a home to accommodate fire equipment, with only well-irrigated plantings. Since wildfire was noted as one of the top community concerns, this issue is a high priority for many.

Minimum house size. The County regulations for Sawtooth City require a minimum house size of 750 square feet, related to Sawtooth NRA limitations. Some residents feel this may be an outdated requirement.

Storage Building Size. Need for storage of snowmobiles, recreational vehicles, bicycles and household items was noted in the survey and the community meeting as a need. The current County regulations limiting outbuildings to an overall maximum of 850 square feet are considered too restrictive by residents, and may be contributing to outdoor storage and clutter. There is a desire,

however, to retain the proportional size of outbuildings to the primary residence.

Solar Panel Regulations. The current rules do not allow solar panels that are reflective, related to Sawtooth NRA requirements for “nonreflective roofs.” Opinions varied as to whether this needs to be addressed. Alternatives discussed included freestanding solar panels (depending on if they were counted towards building coverage) and changing technology that could result in non-reflective solar panels.

## Wildfire

Wildfire was noted as the number one concern of Sawtooth City residents in the initial stakeholder meeting. While residents are very positive about the creation of their own fire department, the strict tree removal regulations are viewed by many as limiting their ability to create defensible space around their homes. At the same time, some residents expressed concern at the potentially negative visual impact of additional tree-removal. Community-wide defensible space that is designed to help protect the entire Sawtooth City neighborhood may also be a viable option. The Sawtooth City area participates in the Sawtooth Valley Wildfire Collaborative, which addresses wildfire issues on surrounding public lands including forest thinning projects.

## Infrastructure and service provision

In response to the question, “What changes in your neighborhood over the last 5 to 10 years are you the most proud of?” Sawtooth City residents noted their Fire Department, winter snow plowing and the recycling center. These responses reflect local commitment to needed infrastructure and services. Most residents stated satisfaction with basic services such as road maintenance, fire protection, solid waste disposal, recycling and community water service. Residents are proud of their self-sufficiency and they noted that Sawtooth City is a safe place to raise a family, have guests and allow their children to have the freedom of exploring.

While phone service is not typically addressed in land use plans, it was a topic of discussion. Two-thirds of those responding to the online survey indicated that they would like to have full cellular service. Another 21% would like to have emergency coverage only, and 12% like having no service.

The following items related to infrastructure and service provision also were noted as concerns:

- Sawtooth City is far from many essential services. A trip to the hospital is a 55-minute ambulance ride.
- Distance from the county seat – the area is serviced by Blaine County, but is geographically closer to Stanley.
- Concern over wildfire, as discussed above.
- Concern over speeding (highway and local roads).

## Zoning and nuisance regulations

Nuisance issues were raised both in the citizen survey and in the on-site meetings. Opinions vary on neighborhood aesthetic values, with the highest degree of variation on the topic of “outdoor clutter”. What some citizens see as local charm and character, others see as nuisance junk, detracting from their scenic appreciation of the area.

The Blaine County Code contains a number of unique zoning provisions for Sawtooth City related

to property maintenance and nuisances, adopted as part of the cooperative process with the Sawtooth NRA for Designated Communities. The County, having limited resources, has done relatively little enforcement of nuisance-type regulations. The Sawtooth City Association has intermittently addressed these issues through the years. Opinions differ widely as to the need to increase enforcement of these regulations.

## Remote Inholdings

Sixteen patented mining claim tax parcels totaling over a thousand acres exist deep in the backcountry. These claims are outside the congressionally-designated Sawtooth NRA boundary, so are not subject to the same planning goals. However, the land surrounding the patented mining claims and the laws governing access to these parcels across Forest Service lands is still administered by the USFS through the Sawtooth NRA and the Forest Plan. While development of these patented mining claim sites would be limited by County MOD, emergency service access and other regulations, the remoteness of these parcels present a challenge for land use planning.



*Photo credit - Carol Waller*



*Photo credit - Carol Waller*

## Desired Outcomes

### Policy Statements:

- SC-1 Provide planning resources to identify and zone appropriate locations for employee housing in the Smiley Creek area, particularly for employees of the Smiley Creek Lodge.
- SC-2 In order to provide options to car travel from camping areas, participate with community members, business owners and state and federal agencies in the discussion of the pros and cons of formalizing a safe ORV route from nearby camping areas to the Smiley Creek Lodge. Consider also other forms of nonmotorized travel.
- SC-3 Work with the Sawtooth NRA and other agencies towards the provision of public restrooms in the Sawtooth City area.
- SC-4 Work with Sawtooth City residents to revise Blaine County code regarding regulations on tree and vegetation removal near buildings in order to achieve more consistent defensible space guidelines.
- SC-5 Modify outdated Sawtooth City Code regulations such as minimum house size, maximum storage building size and solar panel regulations where possible, while maintaining consistency with Sawtooth NRA regulations.
- SC-6 Facilitate citizen desires to investigate lower speed limits on State Highway 75 near Smiley Creek Lodge.
- SC-7 Monitor community complaints regarding nuisances and enforce as necessary. Consult with Sawtooth City Association for community input on nuisances and similar matters.
- SC-8 Check aerial imagery of remote inholdings to observe potential illegal construction. Review carefully all aspects of potential impact in any application for building or development.
- SC-9 Enforce and, if necessary, update lighting regulations that minimize artificial light pollution as called for in the Central Idaho Dark Sky Reserve. Encourage the use of new lighting technologies as they emerge.