

1. POPULATION

1.1 Executive Summary – Key Findings

Anticipating changes in population numbers and composition is essential to planning for future needs of Conrad, Valier, and Pondera County. Key findings include:

- In 2000, county population was 6,424; Conrad was 2,753, and Valier was 498.
- Data from the 2010 census will not be available until 2011.
- Population numbers are generally declining county-wide. The area of Heart Butte is a notable exception, with a 40% increase from 1990 to 2000.
- Few vacant homes (1.6%) are identified as for seasonal or recreational use.
- The County is generally older in population than the State of Montana or the Nation. In 2000, median age was 38.6 in Pondera County, 40.3 in Conrad, and 42.7 in Valier.
- In Conrad and Valier there were proportionately slightly fewer family households in 2000 compared to the state and nation.
- The percentage of persons age 65+ living alone in Conrad (16.2%) and Valier (18.6%) was considerably higher than the state (10%) and nation (9.2%).
- County lags behind the state and nation in terms of persons with a bachelor's degree or higher - 14% for Pondera County compared to 17.2% in Montana and 15.5% nationally.
- In 2000, Pondera County had the eighth highest percentage of persons ages 21 and over with a disability among Montana's 56 counties. With a rate of 85%, Valier had more than double the national rate of disabilities for persons age 65+.
- County-wide population is projected to decline to 5,280 by 2030, a decline of nearly 18% compared to 2000 census count of 6,424.

1.2 Key Issues/Perspectives/Preferences raised via public involvement relevant to this topic

Comments received at public meetings held in Valier, Conrad, Brady, and Dupuyer in 2009 raised some population-related issues: age of county residents and need for families with children (Valier and Dupuyer), American Indian cultural differences (Dupuyer), and percent of low income residents (income topic addressed economic section of this growth policy (Pondera Port Authority)).

1.3 Existing Conditions

1.3.1 Historical Population Trends and Current Numerical Estimates

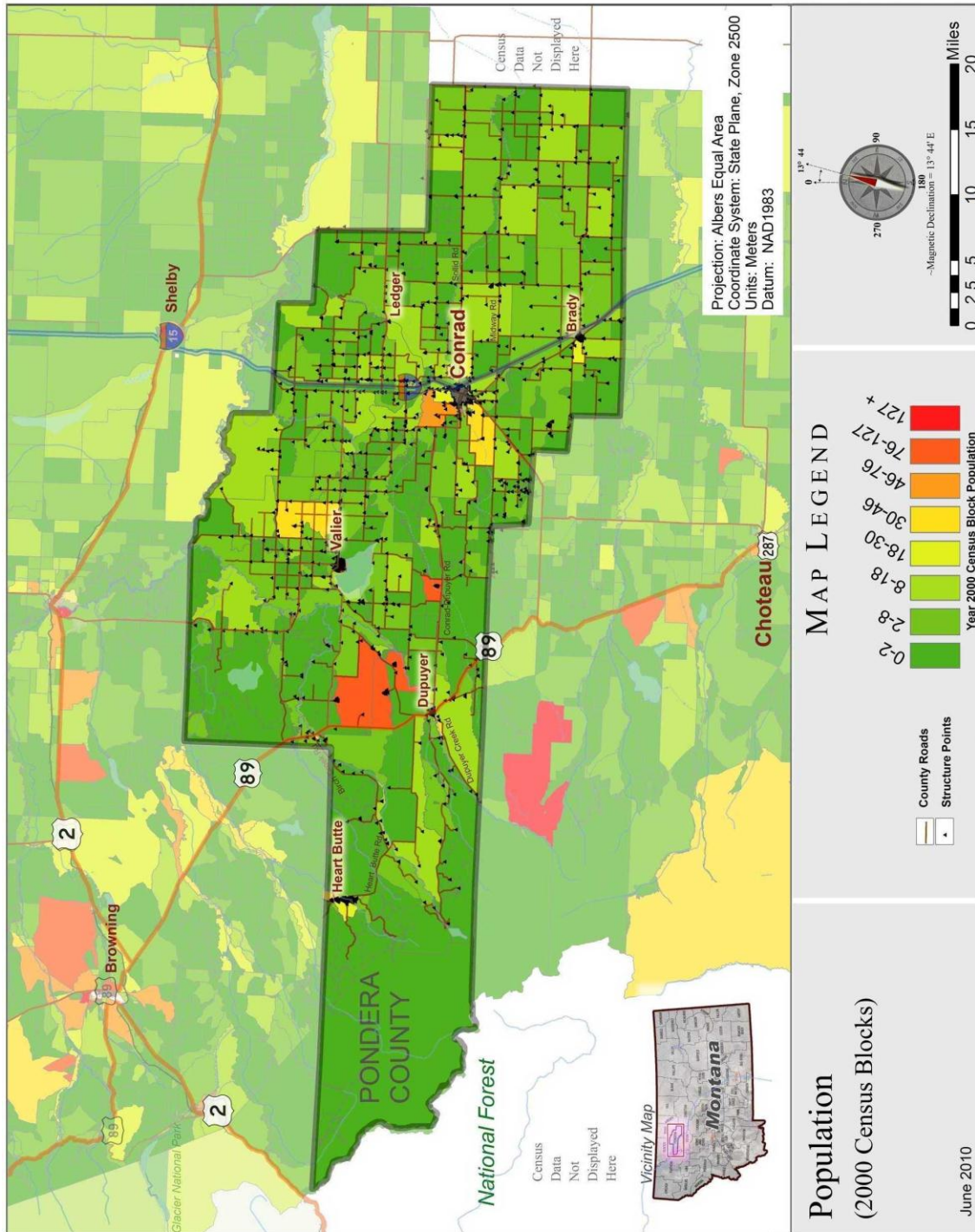
Population in Pondera County grew 12% from 5,741 persons at the time of the first decennial census of the county in 1920 to 6,424 persons in 2000. Growth occurred quickly in the first few decades, and then population began to decline in the 1960s. (Refer to Table 1.)

Population of the entire state increased by several-fold from 142,924 persons at the time it was first counted in the 1890 census to 902,195 in the 2000 census. (Refer to Table 1). Most of the State's growth occurred in Yellowstone, Missoula, Cascade, Flathead, and Lewis and Clark Counties. Many Montana counties have historic population trends similar to Pondera County and some have seen significant declines, such as Fergus County, which declined more than 40 percent since its population peak, (CEIC).

Table 1. Population 1890-2000 in Montana and Pondera County		
	MONTANA	PONDERA
1890	142,924	...
1900	243,329	...
1910	376,053	...
1920	548,889	5,741
1930	537,606	6,964
1940	559,456	6,716
1950	591,024	6,392
1960	674,767	7,653
1970	694,409	6,611
1980	786,690	6,731
1990	799,065	6,433
2000	902,195	6,424
% change 1920-2000	64%	12%

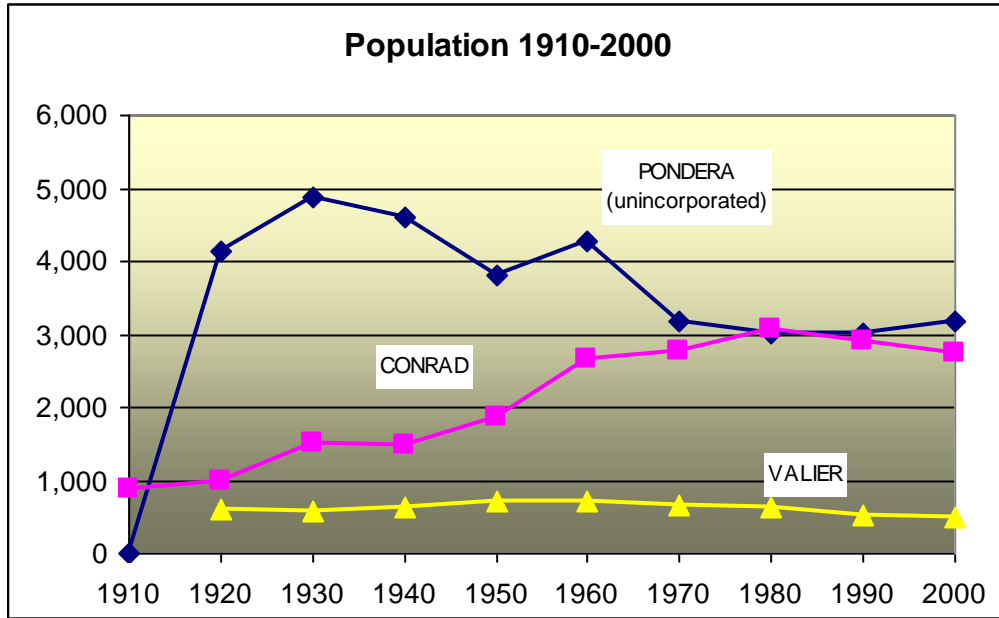
... = County had not yet been established when the decennial census of population was conducted.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Decennial Censuses of Population (Title varies per census), 1890-2000. Processed by the Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Department of Commerce, Updated November 2002



Population in the county is concentrated in the two incorporated municipalities of Conrad and Valier, the unincorporated community of Heart Butte, which is counted separately in the census as a “Census Designated Place” (CDP), the communities of Dupuyer and Brady (which do not have separate census place designations), and the religious colonies of New Miami, Midway, Pondera, Birch Creek, and Kingsbury.

Figure 1: Population 1910-2000



Note: The counts reflect both growth annexation which occurred during the previous intercensal period. Unincorporated area = total county population less combined population of Valier and Conrad. Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Decennial Censuses of Population (Title varies per census), 1890-2000. Processed by the Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Department of Commerce, March 21, 2001.

Conrad’s population peaked in 1980 at 3,074 and was 2,753 in 2000. Valier’s population peaked in 1960 at 794 persons and was 498 in 2000. The unincorporated areas of the county (total county area less Conrad and Valier) had a peak population in 1930 with 4,890 persons (See Figure 1). The unincorporated areas continued to decline until 1990 and then began a slight increase to 3,073. This increase is attributable to population growth of nearly 40% in Heart Butte between 1990 and 2000 (Refer to Table 2.).

Table 2. Population Change 1990-2000 in Pondera County				
			Numeric	POPULATION
	2000	1990	Change	% CHANGE****
County/City/Town/CDP*	CENSUS	CENSUS	1990 to 2000	1990 to 2000
PONDERA COUNTY	6,424	6,433	-9	-0.14
Conrad	2,753	2,891	-138	-4.77
Heart Butte CDP	698	499	199	39.88
Valier	498	519	-21	-4.05
Balance of County	2,475	2,524	-49	-1.94

* Census designated places (CDPs) are delineated for each decennial census as the statistical counterparts of incorporated places. CDPs are delineated to provide data for settled concentrations of population that are identifiable by name but are not legally incorporated under the laws of the state in which they are located. **** Boundaries of Census Designated Places (CDPs) may vary from one decennial census to the next with changes in the settlement pattern; a CDP with the same name as in an earlier census does not necessarily have the same boundary. Census counts of Incorporated Places (cities and towns) reflect population change through both migration and land annexation.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Released March 21, 2001; Compiled by: Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Dept. of Commerce

A relatively low percentage of vacant homes are used for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. Such homes accounted for 1.6% of the total housing stock in 2000. (U.S. Census) Some places in Montana have seasonal housing rates of 20 to 30% or more, which can result in dramatic seasonal population fluctuations as well as increasing numbers of persons who own land in the county but who vote elsewhere (Cossitt).

Population density is 3.95 persons per square mile in Pondera County and 6.2 for Montana (CEIC).

Although this Growth Policy population report was prepared in 2010, Decennial census data are not typically available for a year or more after collection. Between censuses, the U.S. Census Bureau provides annual population estimates for counties and incorporated places. These data indicate continued population decline for Conrad and Valier and overall decline for the County since 2000 (See Table 3.).

Table 3. Population Estimates July 2008			
Geographic Area	April 1, 2000 Census	July 1, 2008	% Change Between Census 2000 and July 1, 2008
Pondera County	6,424	5,852	-8.9%
Conrad city	2,753	2,501	-9.2%
Valier town	498	454	-8.8%

Source: CEIC: Table 4: Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Incorporated Places in Montana, Listed Alphabetically: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2008 (SUB-EST2008-04-30), derived from Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Release Date: July 1, 2009

1.3.2 Population – Existing Characteristics

With the exception of Heart Butte, the county population is older than the state’s overall population. In 2000, median age in the county ranged from 21.3 years in Heart Butte to 42.7 years in Valier. Median age for Montana was 37.5 and for the nation 35.3 (Refer to Table 4.).

Table 4. Median Age - 2000	
Pondera County (Total)	38.6
Conrad city,	40.3
Valier town	42.7
Heart Butte	21.3
Montana	37.5
Nation	35.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-1

Table 5. Population Under 18 and 65 and older - 2000				
	<18 Years (Number)	<18 Years (% of Total)	65+ Years (Number)	65+ Years (% of Total)
Pondera County (Total)	1,900	29.6%	1,044	16.3%
Conrad city, Montana	725	26.3%	577	21.0%
Valier town, Montana	122	24.5%	101	20.3%
Heart Butte	308	44.1%	30	4.3%
Balance of County	745	30.1%	336	13.6%
State		25.5%		13.4%
Nation		25.7%		12.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-1

Countywide, the proportion of persons under the age of 18 to total population is more robust than that of the nation and due in large part to the very young population on the portion of the Blackfeet Reservation that falls within Pondera County. In 2000, Conrad also had a larger portion of the population under age 18 (26.3%) compared to the state (25.5%) and nation (25.7%).

The proportion of older persons is also greater than the state and the nation. In 2000, 16.3% of all county residents were 65 years or older. This proportion would also likely be higher were it not for the very low number of persons age 65+ on the Blackfeet Reservation. In Conrad and Valier in 2000, more than one fifth of the population was 65 years or older.

The 2008 census estimates indicate the population continues to get older overall, with an estimated median age of 42.9 in Pondera County compared to 39.3 for the state overall (CEIC).

Table 6. Population by Race - 2000			
	One race; White; Percent	One race; American Indian and Alaska Native; Percent	Two or more races; Percent
Pondera County (Total)	83.7	14.5	1.5
Conrad city, Montana	95.8	2.3	1.3
Valier town, Montana	92.2	5.2	2.6
Heart Butte	4.7	93.7	1.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-1

Pondera County is predominately one race and white, with the exception of areas on the Blackfeet Reservation where the population predominately is American Indian. Off reservation, the largest non-white population is American Indian (See Table 6.).

Table 7. Type of Households - 2000				
	Total Households	Family Households	Non-Family Households	Householder 65+ living alone
	#	%	%	%
Pondera County (Total)	2,410	72.2	27.8	12.3
Conrad city, Montana	1,154	65.5	34.5	16.2
Valier town, Montana	220	65.0	35.0	18.6
Heart Butte	164	86.6	13.4	3.0
Montana	----	66.2	33.8	10.0
Nation	----	68.1	31.9	9.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-1

The county overall has a higher percentage of family households than the state or the nation, due to the much higher proportion of family households on the Blackfeet Reservation (86.6%). In Conrad and Valier there were proportionately slightly fewer family households in 2000 compared to the state and nation. The percentage of persons age 65+ living alone in Conrad (16.2%) and Valier (18.6%) was considerably higher than the state (10%) and nation (9.2%) (See Table 7).

Table 8. Educational Attainment – 2000		
	% High School Graduate or Higher	% Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Pondera County (Total)	34.9	14.0
Conrad city, Montana	39.0	14.3
Valier town, Montana	24.0	9.3
Heart Butte	43.3	14.9
Montana	31.3	17.2
Nation	28.6	15.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Table DP-2

In 2000, Pondera County had a greater proportion (34.9%) of high school graduates than the state or the nation, a reflection in part of the 43.3% of persons in Heart Butte who have graduated from high school. At 14%, Pondera County lagged behind state (17.2%) and national (15.5%) rates for persons with a bachelor's degree or higher (See Table 8.).

Table 9. Population with Disabilities – 2000		
	% of Population 21-64 years with Disability	% of Population 65+ with Disability
Pondera County (Total)	21.9	38.1
Conrad city, Montana	19.3	35.3
Valier town, Montana	22.8	84.6
Heart Butte	33.3	35.1
Montana	16.9	39.6
Nation	19.2	41.9

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table DP-2.

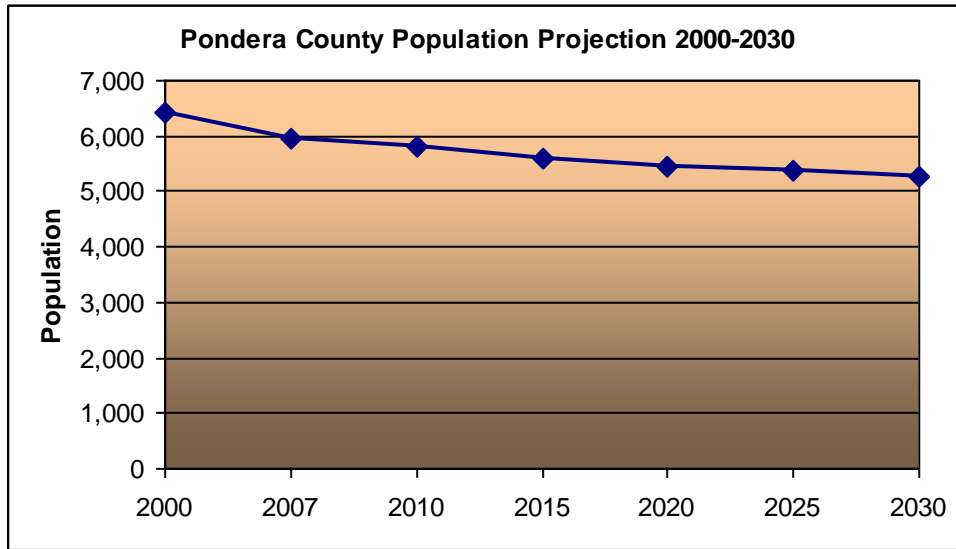
DEFINITION: People 21 years and over are considered to have a disability if they have one or more of the following: a) blindness, deafness, or a severe vision or hearing impairment; b) a substantial limitation in the ability to perform basic physical activities, such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying; c) difficulty learning, remembering, or concentrating; d) difficulty dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home; e) difficulty going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor's office; f) difficulty working at a job or business (age 21-64).

In 2000, Pondera County had the eighth highest percentage of persons ages 21 and over with a disability among Montana's 56 counties (CEIC). With a rate of 85%, Valier had more than double the national rate of disabilities for persons age 65+ (See Table 9).

1.4 Population Projections

The overall population of the county is projected to decrease over the next 20 years, according to projections released from the State of Montana. Population would decrease by nearly 18% from 6,424 in 2000 to 5,280 in 2030. Considering that the population on the Blackfeet Reservation is increasing, the projected population loss off-reservation is likely to be more pronounced than shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Pondera County Population Projection 2000-2030



Source: "Montana Population Projections" prepared by CEIC, using data from NPA Data Services Inc. issued 2008

Planning for the future will need to consider projected overall population numbers and trends towards increasing numbers and proportion of older persons.

Sources

CEIC: See Census and Economic Information Center

Census and Economic Information Center, Montana Department of Commerce. Data retrieved from website, May and June 2010, <http://www.ceic.mt.gov/Demographics.asp>

Map 1: "Montana County Population: Population Density 2000"

Table 1: Population 1890-2000 in Montana and Pondera County

Table 2: Population Change 1990-2000 in Pondera County

Table 3: Population Estimates July 2008

Figure 1: Population 1910-2000

Figure 2: Pondera Population Projection 2000-2030

Cossitt, Anne. Work with communities in Madison and Gallatin Counties. 2005-2010.

Pondera Port Authority. Growth Policy Meetings Summaries. 2010.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. Tables DP-1 and DP-2. Retrieved from website in May and June 2010: <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

Table 4: Median Age 2000

Table 5: Population Under 18 and 65 and Older 2000

Table 6: Population by Race 2000

Table 7: Type of Household 2000

Table 8: Educational Attainment 2000

Table 9: Population with Disabilities 2000