

Natural Resources & Hazardous Areas

Conditions

Surface and Ground Water Resources

The City of Sandpoint is located on the northern shores of Lake Pend Oreille and lies within the Clark Fork/Pend Oreille Watershed. This watershed extends as far southwest as Butte, Montana and as far northeast as Metaline Falls, Washington and drains approximately 25,000 square miles of Montana, Idaho, and Washington. Lake Pend Oreille is the largest natural lake in Idaho. The lake has a surface area of 128 square miles, includes 112 miles of shoreline, and reaches depths of approximately 1,200 feet.

Lake Pend Oreille and Little Sand Creek serve as the supply for the Sandpoint public water system. The water supply from both bodies is considered “high-quality” by the 2006 Sandpoint Water System plan, and meets all rules and regulations governing drinking water.

Air Quality

Sandpoint is currently within a non-attainment area for particulate matter. According to the IDEQ, a number of factors

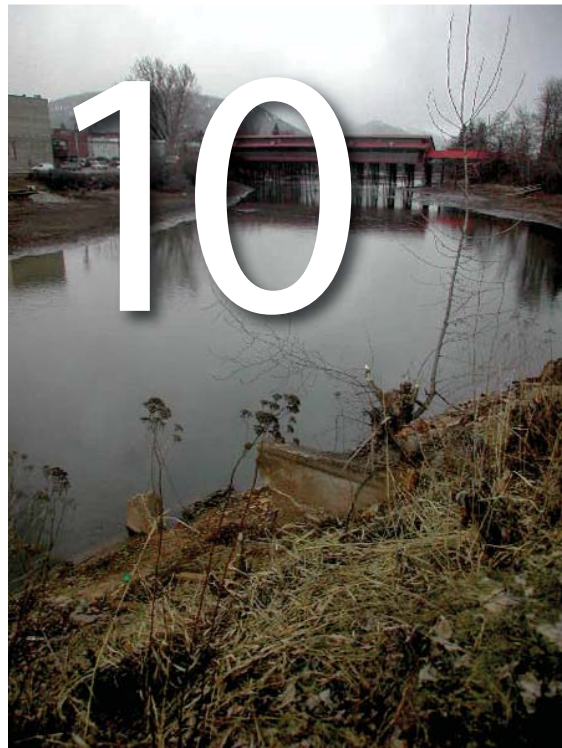


Figure 10.1 - Sandpoint's proximity to lakes, wetlands and waterways provides an incredibly scenic setting, but requires careful attention to surface and ground water quality. (Image source: Studio Cascade, Inc.)

contribute to the amount of particulate matter in Sandpoint's air. Topography — Sandpoint's location at the base of foothills — is one of the strongest contributors to particulate matter buildup. Other sources for particulate matter are wood burning, road dust, and some industrial sources.

Sandpoint is subject to continuous monitoring for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} (particulate matter of 10 micrometers and 2.5 micrometers). A number of factors contribute to the amount of particulate matter in Sandpoint air including topography, wood burning, road dust and industrial sources.

Hazardous Areas

Potentially, the most damaging natural hazard to the City of Sandpoint is flooding. The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Flood Insurance Program have determined that some areas are prone to flooding.

Earthquakes in Bonner County and the Sandpoint area are infrequent and relatively weak. Sandpoint is in the “2b” earthquake zone specifying a “moderate earthquake threat” according to the 1991 Uniform Building Code Seismic Zone Map.

Highway 95, the major north-south route through Idaho, bisects Sandpoint and heavily used railroad lines operate on both the east and west boundaries and bisect the city on the north side. These transportation routes open the potential for toxic waste or hazardous material spills in and adjacent to the city. Various commercial activities generate hazardous waste which must be appropriately disposed of in a safe manner for employees and the surrounding population

The airport fueling station and other gas stations in the City present a small but real risk for fuel tank leakage fouling these Sandpoint waterways.

Radon is a carcinogenic gas emitted from the ground that may become trapped in houses. Sandpoint is considered to be in a high radon-potential zone and high levels have been reported in the Bonner County area. However, each house should be tested individually, as source origin and ventilation characteristics vary from house to house.

Brownfields and Historic Hazardous Sites

In 2005, the IDEQ prepared a report entitled “Bonner County, Idaho Historic Sites with Potential Hazardous Materials.” This report listed a number of sites in various stages of identification and remediation. :

Within the city of Sandpoint, 61 sites were identified by the 2005 IDEQ study. Fourteen of the sites listed are classed as “brownfields.” Brownfields are lands previously used for industrial or certain commercial uses (like service stations) contaminated by low concentrations of pollution or hazardous waste and may be cleaned up to be occupied by other land uses. These sites are located throughout Sandpoint.

Viewsheds

A viewshed is access to scenic vistas from multiple points throughout the city. Sandpoint residents deeply value views of the surrounding foothills, Sand Creek and Lake Pend Oreille. Residents frequently identified Baldy Mountain as an important view to preserve and enhance over time. Water views are critical to residents, many who enjoy walks at City Beach, activities at War Memorial Field, visits to Lakeview Park or simple views of Sand Creek and abutting shoreline areas. Opportunities to preserve and enhance such views are a priority and should remain so in future planning efforts.

Water Access and Shorelines

In addition to views of the lake, Sandpoint residents value public access to both Lake Pend Oreille and to Sand Creek. The City already operates two of boat launches along the shorelines, two marinas, swimming areas, and some passive viewing opportunities in parks on the water. Boat launches and other lake viewing opportunities are available at City

Beach Park, 3rd Avenue Pier, Lakeview Park and War Memorial Field. Much of the Lake Pend Oreille shoreline is occupied by private residences, especially along the south end of Sandpoint. In the future, residents would like to see increased and enhanced access to the lake and continued access to Sand Creek.

The city recognizes the potential of natural disasters and hazardous spills and will use all available measures to mitigate damages and to protect our residents.

Needs

Containment of city sprawl and promotion of infill development is very important to protecting natural resources. Surface water quality is the resource most in need of active protection, due to its role as the city's drinking water source. Continued efforts toward protecting air quality are also necessary.

Preventing natural disasters is difficult, but controlling man-made hazards is possible.

Plan Concept

Sandpoint was founded upon and remains framed by its natural resources. Although the general population doesn't depend on as many natural resources for survival or economic gain as they once did, they value them no less. The desire to preserve open space in the ACI will be served by primarily focusing development in the existing City limits.

Sandpoint is also a city in nature, surrounded on all sides by the best features of North Idaho's landscape. This comprehensive plan aims to highlight and protect this natural environment, including concentrating growth within the existing city limits. Although Sandpoint's ACI extends into the picturesque hills surrounding the city, the growth strategies articulated by this comprehensive plan work to minimize urban incursion into the ACI; this helps ensure scenic and natural attributes valued today will be preserved into the future.

☒ Goal NR/H-1: Resource Protection

Preserve and protect Sandpoint's natural resources.

Policies

- A** Encourage, through arrangement of land uses and infill, the protection of natural resource lands and wildlife in the city and neighboring regions of the ACI.
- B** Continue to recognize natural-resource related jobs as part of Sandpoint's heritage and encourage industry to use sustainable practices.
- C** Provide safe and desirable transportation routes for natural-resource industries outside of the urban center of Sandpoint.
- D** Encourage the development of a long-range plan to protect Sandpoint's water quality and reduce nutrient load into the Pend Oreille water system.
- E** Protect regional air quality by supporting aggressive pollution mitigation strategies and attracting clean industries.
- F** Concentrate growth within city limits.
- G** Encourage public acquisition and/or protection of sensitive habitats including, but not limited to, wetlands and shorelines.
- H** Protect scenic resources – water and mountain views – by identifying and preserving viewsheds.

☒ Goal NR/H-2: Hazards Protection

Protect Sandpoint residents from the major hazards: floods, earthquakes, and human-caused hazards.

Policies

- A** Protect natural wetlands and initiate stream-bank stabilization to limit the impact of flood events on urban development.
- B** Apply IBC standards for building to prevent damage from earthquakes to all new construction.
- C** Where possible, discourage the transportation of hazardous substances through Sandpoint.
- D** Continue to update and monitor a disaster plan for each of the likely natural and human-caused hazards in Sandpoint.