

# LASSEN COUNTY AT A GLANCE

## WHERE IS LASSEN COUNTY?

### Regional Context and Influences

Located in northern California, Lassen County is bordered by Nevada to the east, Modoc County to the north, Plumas and Sierra Counties to the south, and Shasta County to the west. The county's terrain encompasses the Cascade and Sierra Nevada mountain ranges, and the high desert environment of the Great Basin. The average elevation of the county is 4,295 feet above sea level.

Within the county's boundaries are portions of Lassen Volcanic National Park, and Lassen, Modoc, and Plumas National Forests, as well as many other significant land holdings by the Bureau of Land Management, State of California, and other public agencies.

Approximately the same size as the state of Connecticut, Lassen County represents only 0.1 percent of California's population. Reno, Nevada is the closest metropolitan center, located approximately 84 miles from the county seat, Susanville. Since 2000, the population in Reno has increased nearly 15 percent, putting tremendous pressure on southeast Lassen County land and resources.

The town of Susanville is the county's only incorporated city, and is where the majority of the county's major services are located. Other unincorporated communities include Westwood, Clear Creek, Bieber, Johnstonville, Janesville, Standish, Litchfield, Doyle, Herlong, Milford, Leavitt Lake, and Little Valley.

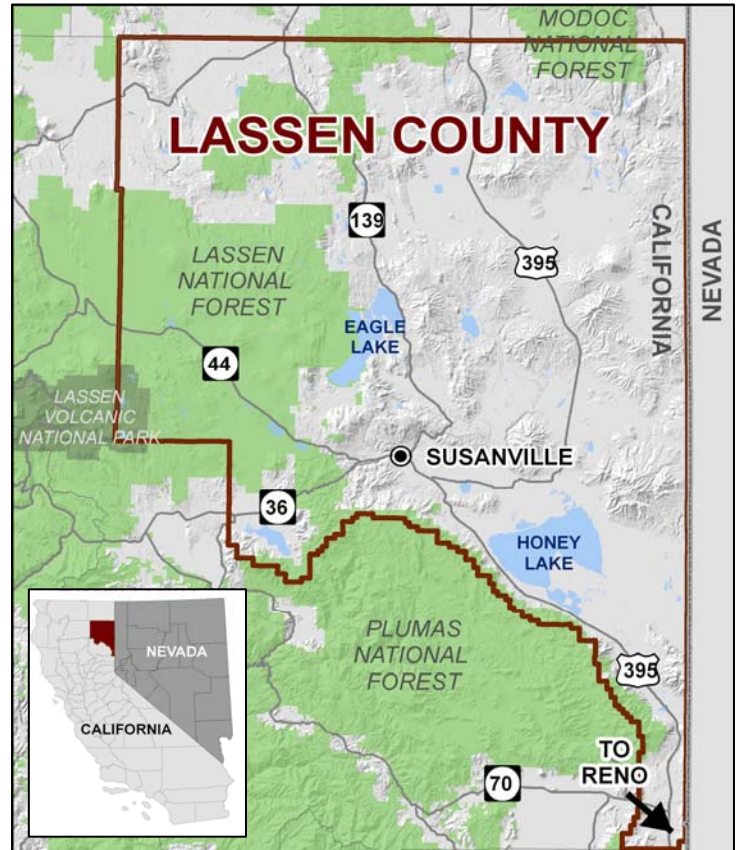
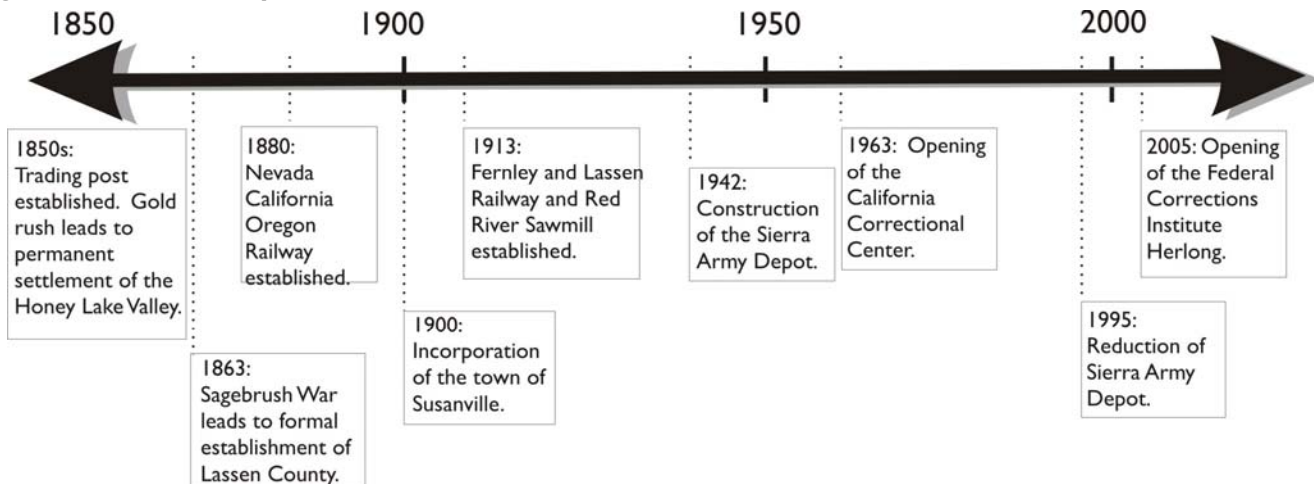
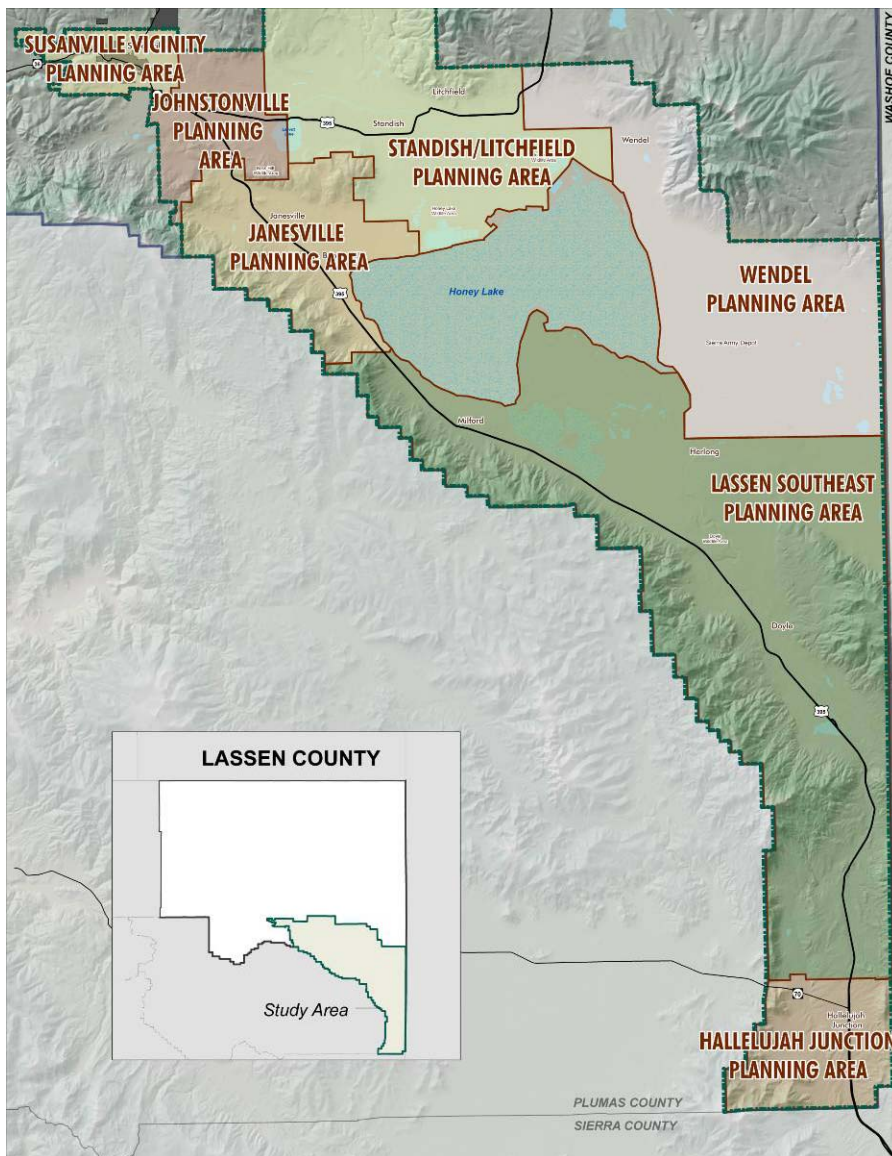


Figure 1: Location and Context

Figure 2: Lassen County Historic Milestones





**Figure 3: Study Area and Planning Areas**

## WHAT PORTION OF THE COUNTY WILL THE AREA PLAN UPDATE ADDRESS?

### Study Area

The study area for the Lassen County Area Plan Update encompasses an area south and east of Susanville to the state line, as identified on Figure 3, at left. While this Community Profile provides some information relevant to Lassen County as a whole, the focus of this planning effort will be on the study area as defined.

### Planning Areas

The study area includes five planning areas:

- Susanville Vicinity Planning Area;
- Johnstonville Planning Area;
- Standish Litchfield Planning Area;
- Janesville Planning Area; and
- Lassen Southeast Planning Area.

Each planning area varies in its size and characteristics, as described in the planning area snapshots provided. The Wendel and Hallelujah Junction planning areas provide context for this planning effort, but will not be addressed in detail by this planning effort.

# WHO LIVES IN LASSEN COUNTY?

## Population and Demographics

- **Population:** Lassen County is home to nearly 36,000 people. However, total population figures for the county can be misleading since they typically include residents of the multiple correctional facilities located within the county. In 2008 incarcerated residents accounted for more than 30 percent of the county's population (11,141 people in the county's three correctional facilities out of 35,757 total people).
- **Households:** In 2006 there were an estimated 26,128 people living in households, with an average household size of 2.5 people per household.
- **Population Density:** In 2008 population density in Lassen County is approximately 5.25 people per square mile (excluding inmates).
- **Average Annual Rate of Growth:** Average annual rates of growth in Lassen County (excluding percentage attributed to inmate population) were highest between 1990 and 2000 (3.17 percent).

Figure 4: Population Demographics

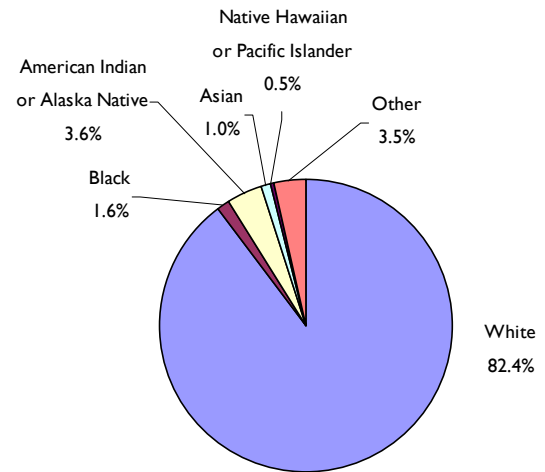


Table 1: Population Estimates and Projections

YEAR	TOTAL COUNTY POPULATION	ADJUSTED POPULATION (EXCLUDING INMATES)	AVERAGE ANNUAL RATE OF GROWTH
1980	21,800	17,918	--
1990	27,700	23,818	2.89
2000	33,828	25,502	0.69
2007	35,031	25,688	0.10
2008	35,757	26,414	2.83
2020	42,394	TBA <sup>1</sup>	TBA
2030	TBA	TBA	TBA

Source: Lassen County, 2009; California Department of Finance, Community Profile, 2007; US Census Quick Facts, 2007; Clarion Associates, 2009.

### DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

#### Age and Gender

- 51.1% of Lassen County residents are male, 48.9% are female.
- 28.7% of Lassen County residents are under the age of 18.
- 11.7% of Lassen County residents are age 65 and older.

#### Education

- 81.8% (age 25 and higher) of Lassen County residents have a high school degree.
- 13.3% of Lassen County residents have a bachelor's degree or higher.

#### Sources:

CA Department of Finance, 2006  
 US Census Quick Facts, 2007  
 2000 US Census data  
 Lassen County, 2009

Table 2: Correctional Facility Populations

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY	OPENING DATE	ESTIMATED 2008-2009 POPULATION
Sheriff Detention Facility-State Inmates	--	151
California Correctional Center	1963	3,731 (center and camps)
High Desert State Prison	1995	4,444
Federal Corrections Institute	2005	1,017
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>9,343</b>

Source: California Department of Corrections, Weekly Inmate Population Estimates, March 2009.

<sup>1</sup>Need projections for prison populations.



# WHAT IS THE ECONOMY LIKE IN LASSEN COUNTY?

## Industries and Employment

### TRENDS AND KEY ISSUES

#### Business and Industry

- Lassen County is home to many small businesses. In 2004, 75 percent of the county's businesses employed fewer than 10 people.
- Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting make up 12 percent of the county's private industry employment.

#### Agriculture

- While agriculture comprises a very small portion the county's labor force (370 jobs), it is the leading industry in terms of value of production. In 2005, the county's agriculture produced \$51.8 million.
- Primary agriculture commodities are hay (\$24.3 million), livestock (\$14.6 million), and strawberry nursery stock (\$6.5 million).
- The presence of small-scale specialty agricultural operations such as nursery stock has increased in recent years.

#### Labor Force

The total county labor force in 2009 was 13,510. Lassen County's unemployment rate in 2005 was 8 percent, up slightly from 7.1 percent in 2000.

#### Government Sector

Employment in Lassen County primarily revolves around governmental jobs at federal, state, and local agencies. These agencies include the Sierra Army Depot, the Federal Correctional Institute Herlong, the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, High Desert State Prison and the California Correctional Center, Lassen College, and other governmental agencies. 5,250 of the county's jobs are in state and local government. 1,310 of those jobs are in federal government. Nearly 3,000 government sector jobs are provided by the correctional facilities located in the county. The distribution of these jobs is noted in Table 3, below.

**Table 3: Correctional Facility Employment**

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES
High Desert State Prison	1,511
California Correctional Center	1,091
Federal Corrections Institute	350
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,952</b>

Source: California Department of Corrections; Federal Corrections Institute, 2009

#### Private Industry Employment

Private sector employment in Lassen County encompasses a variety of industries, the largest of which are trade, transportation, and utilities (1,110 jobs), educational and health services (880 jobs), and leisure and hospitality (580 jobs).

#### Income

Incomes in Lassen County are below the state average (\$47,676 in Lassen County compared with \$59,928 for the state of California) and there is a greater proportion of people living in poverty in Lassen County (13.6 percent) than in the state (12.4 percent).

#### Sources:

- CA Department of Finance, 2006
- US Census Quick Facts, 2007
- 2000 Census data
- Lassen County, 2009
- EDD, Local area profile, Lassen County, 2009

# HOW IS LAND IN THE COUNTY BEING USED?

## Existing Land Use and Ownership

- **Total land Area:** Lassen County covers 4,690.3 square miles (3,001,780 acres)
- **Public Ownership:** 63% of lands in Lassen County are publicly owned. Major public land holdings include lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, California Fish and Game, California State Lands, and California Division of Wildlife. The remaining 37% are privately owned.
- **Farmland:** In 2002, Lassen County had 419 farms covering 481,826 or 16.5 percent of its land area.
- **Williamson Act:** 322,667 acres of land are enrolled in the Williamson Act, a state program enacted in 1965, which enables private landowners to contract with counties and cities to voluntarily restrict land to agricultural and open space uses.
- **Timber Production Zones** account for 312,617 acres of land in the county or 11 percent of its land area.

An overview of existing land use and ownership patterns is provided for each of the planning areas in planning area profiles that accompany this report.

## Housing

- **Housing stock:** In 2008 Lassen County's housing stock consisted of 13,067 dwelling units. Most of the county's housing stock (92 percent) is comprised of single-family units. Of that 92 percent, 70.5 percent are stick built homes and 19.4 percent are mobile homes.
- **Occupancy:** Nearly 20 percent of the housing stock was reported vacant in 2008, a trend which has remained steady since 2000.
- **Ownership:** In 2000 the rate of home ownership was estimated at 68.3 percent, higher than the state as a whole (56.9 percent).
- **Median Value:** The median value of owner-occupied dwelling units in 2000 was \$106,700, which was less than half that of the state as a whole (\$211,500).

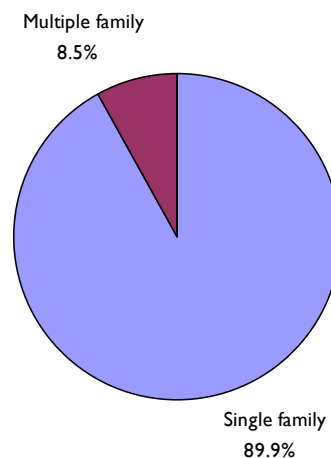


Figure 5: Housing Characteristics



### TRENDS AND KEY ISSUES:

#### Growth and Development

- In 2006 a total of 120 single-family housing units were authorized in the unincorporated areas of the county, with a combined valuation of \$21.7 million. Building permits dropped to 59 in 2007.
- Growth in most areas of the county is limited by the limited availability of centralized water and sewer service.
- Residents have expressed a desire for more coordinated patterns of growth in the county.

#### Agricultural Land Preservation

- Historic division of agricultural lands for rural residential development in areas surrounding the county's town centers has created fragmented patterns of use and ownership.
- The retention of contiguous tracts of agricultural land is an important factor in the long-term viability of the county's agricultural industry.

#### Sources:

- CA Department of Finance, 2006
- US Census Quick Facts, 2007
- 2000 US Census data
- Lassen County, 2009



# WHAT ARE THE COUNTY’S NATURAL RESOURCES?

## Environmental Resources

Lassen County’s diverse natural environment ranges from thick forests and snowy mountains to rangeland covered by sagebrush and juniper and expansive high-desert agricultural valleys. This broad landscape offers a wide array of environmental resources, listed below, and far-reaching management and conservation efforts have helped preserve much of their natural characteristics.

### TRENDS AND KEY ISSUES:

#### Water Resources

- Continued availability, management, and quality of ground water resources are key issues facing the county.
- Applied water for municipal and industrial purposes in 1999 represented only 3 percent of the volume applied for agricultural irrigation.
- Additional growth will compete with available ground water resources currently used for irrigation.

#### Vegetation

- The protection of rare and endangered species, control of invasive weeds, and wildfire management remain ongoing challenges for the county.

#### Sources:

Lassen County General Plan, 1999.

## WATER RESOURCES

Average rainfall in the study area ranges from 4 to 40 inches, and average annual snowfall is about 10 to 33 inches, with higher elevations receiving more precipitation than valley areas. Ground water occurs throughout most of the county; Honey Lake Valley and Big Valley are the major groundwater basins.

Some of the county’s most notable surface water resources include:

- **Eagle Lake:** Covering nearly 42 square miles, Eagle Lake is the second largest natural fresh water lake entirely in California. The lake is home to the famous Eagle Lake Trout, and is a popular fishing and recreation destination.
- **Honey Lake:** When full, Honey Lake covers over 90 square miles, although it can be virtually dry during years of low precipitation. Honey Lake is a valuable water fowl nesting area.
- **Reservoirs:** Developed primarily for agricultural use and/or energy production, there are a number of reservoirs in Lassen County including McCoy, Hog Flat, and Mountain Meadows Reservoirs, and Leavitt Lake.
- **Susan River:** Approximately 40 miles long, the Susan River crosses the southern portion of Lassen County and drains into Honey Lake.

## GEOLOGIC AND SOIL RESOURCES

Lassen County lies at the intersection of four major physiographic provinces: the Sierra Nevada, the Cascade Range, the Modoc Plateau and the Basin and Range provinces, each of which is determined by its geologic structure and formation. Wind erosion, streambank erosion, and sedimentation are issues affecting the county’s soil resources, along with urban encroachment.

## VEGETATION

Lassen County’s range of vegetation types and plant communities provide a number values, including erosion and watershed protection, timber resources, wildlife habitat, grazing resources, firewood, biomass fuel, scenic quality, and other values that contribute to the county’s scenic quality and the quality of life of its residents.

## FOREST RESOURCES

In the late 1940's Lassen County was the most important lumber producing county in northeastern California—with its lumber output representing one-tenth of the amount produced in the state. That number had decreased to less than 3 percent of the state total by the mid-1960's. Lumber related industries continue to play a role in Lassen County's economy today on a more limited basis. The county's forest resources continue to be valued for timber production as well as for their scenic quality and the recreation opportunities they provide and the valuable role they play in providing wildlife habitat. Timber Production Zones account for 312,617 acres of land in the county today.

## RANGELAND

Lassen County's rangeland largely corresponds to the semi-arid, sparsely vegetated environment that encompasses the eastern half of the county. Rangelands primarily are used for livestock grazing, but many areas also have significant natural resource value—providing important wildlife habitat, as well as recreational and scenic value. Lassen County is an open range county.

A large portion of the county's rangeland occurs on public lands. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers many of these lands. Lassen County is an open range county.

## MINERAL RESOURCES

A variety of mineral resources have been mined in Lassen County since the 1850's. The most prevalent of these minerals is sand and gravel. The most recent gold mining of activity of significance concluded in 1997 (Hayden Hill Mine).

## ENERGY RESOURCES

Natural resources in the county which are used, or which have the potential for use, to produce energy include: biomass, geothermal, water as a hydroelectric resource, solar, and wind. There are no known oil or natural gas resources in Lassen County of significant quantity.

## AIR QUALITY

The Lassen County Air Pollution Control District has regulatory jurisdiction over the county's air quality permitting process. The overall air quality of Lassen County is considered good.



### TRENDS AND KEY ISSUES:

#### Rangeland

- Ongoing coordination with state and Federal agencies will be necessary to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of rangeland resources.
- The continued availability of grazing allotments in the county is an important factor in the long-term viability of private livestock operations.

#### Scenic Resources

- Development along scenic corridors may detract from the county's scenic quality without a more coordinated approach to growth.

#### Sources:

Lassen County General Plan, 1999.

## SCENIC RESOURCES

Lassen County has designated the following state highways and major county roads as Scenic Highway Corridors:

- US Highway 395;
- SH 44;
- SH 139;
- SH 299; and
- CO. Route A-1.

The county currently applies Design Review Combining Districts along some of these corridors to allow the visual impact of development in designated areas to be reviewed in order to minimize significant adverse impacts.

## WILDLIFE AND HABITAT

A number of important wildlife habitat types exist in Lassen County. Each habitat type and associated wildlife considerations are addressed in the county's 1999 General Plan. The impacts of future growth on these habitats will be an important consideration of this Area Plan Update.

## Resource Management and Conservation

Approximately 63 percent of land in Lassen County is publicly owned. Significant public landholders include the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, and the State of California. These agencies each have different land management specialties and territories, as described in the following table.

**Table 4: Public Land Management Agencies**

AGENCY	MANAGEMENT SPECIALTY	MANAGEMENT AREAS	TOTAL ACREAGE (IN LASSEN COUNTY)
<b>Bureau of Land Management</b>	Responsible for responsible for managing a large spectrum of natural resource values on BLM lands	Varies	1,025,000
<b>National Park Service</b>	National Parks	Lassen Volcanic National Park	21,400
<b>U.S. Forest Service</b>	National forests (including Lassen, Plumas, Modoc and Toiyabe National Forests)	Lassen National Forest (Including 20,000 acre Caribou Wilderness Area) Plumas National Forest Modoc National Forest	610,000
<b>State of California</b>	State Lands Commission (agriculture and mineral commodities)	Varies	TBA
<b>State of California</b>	State of California Department of Fish and Game (wildlife areas)	Honey Lake Wildlife Area Willow Creek Wildlife Area	TBA

Source: Lassen County, 2009.

## Tourism and Recreation

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Lassen County offers plentiful opportunities for outdoor recreation. Camping, fishing, hunting, hiking, bicycling, and snow sports are among the county's most popular recreational activities. In addition to enhancing the quality of life for county residents, these recreation opportunities attract visitors and add to the county's emerging tourism industry. A few noteworthy recreation and tourist attractions include:

- **Bizz Johnson Recreational Trail:** This 30 mile trail stretches from Susanville to Westwood along the Susan River. Formerly a railroad line, the trail is now a multi-use corridor for walking, jogging, bicycling, fishing, and horseback riding.
- **Lassen National Forest:** The forest has more than 40 developed campgrounds, and offers opportunities for backpacking, hiking, wildlife, and scenery viewing.
- **Coppervale Ski Hill:** Located on the southern edge of Lassen National Forest, the ski hill offers seven runs and a terrain park.
- **Eagle Lake:** Known for its famous and rare Eagle Lake Trout, the lake is a popular fishing destination.

### TRENDS AND KEY ISSUES:

#### Recreational Trails

- Organizations including Lassen County, the Bureau of Land Management, the Lassen County Transportation Commission, and the Lassen Land and Trails Trust continue to work to expand the county's trails network.



## HOW DO PEOPLE TRAVEL AROUND LASSEN COUNTY?

### Roads and Highways

Lassen County is served by one U.S. highway and six state highways. These roadways are the county’s primary regional transportation routes. US Highway 395 serves as the primary north/south roadway in the county.

### Railroads

While rail lines played an important part in the original settlement and industry of Lassen County, most of the county’s historic railroads have been abandoned, with some segments converted to trails. A Union Pacific main line is still in operation with access at Herlong.

### Airports

The closest commercial service airport to Lassen County is located in Reno, Nevada. There are five small public airports in Lassen County, and one army airfield, as noted below:

**Table 5: County Airports**

AIRPORT	SIZE OF FACILITY
Susanville Municipal Airport	130 acres (2 runways, 2 helipads)
Spaulding Airport	1 runway
Beiber Airstrip	60 acres ( one runway)
Herlong Airstrip	1 runway
Ravendale Airstrips	17 acres (1 runway)
Amedee Airfield (Sierra Army Depot)	1 runway

Source: Lassen County, 2009.

### Transit

The Lassen Rural Bus system is publicly owned and operated public transportation system. The system includes a fixed route and complimentary paratransit services within Susanville, and commuter services to Westwood, Herlong/Doyle, and Susanville.

#### TRENDS AND KEY ISSUES

##### Commuting Patterns

- Many Lassen County residents commute to a neighboring community or area of the county for work—leading to congestion on some roads during shift changes and peak hours.
- In 2000 the average commute for Lassen County workers was 19.4 minutes.

##### Roadway Improvements

- Caltrans is currently planning for long-term improvements to the US Highway 395 corridor. The location and scope of improvements will need to be coordinated with the county’s future land use planning efforts.

#### Sources:

Lassen County, 2009.

# WHO PROVIDES SERVICES IN LASSEN COUNTY?

## Schools and School Districts

School Districts and primary and secondary schools in Lassen County, along with their location, grade levels, and 2008-2009 enrollments are listed in Table 4, below.

**Table 6: School Districts and School Enrollment**

SCHOOL DISTRICT	SCHOOLS	LOCATION	GRADE LEVELS	2008-2009 ENROLLMENT
<b>Big Valley Joint Unified</b>	Big Valley High School	Beiber	9-12	80
	Big Valley Intermediate	Beiber	4-8	84
	Big Valley Primary	Beiber	K-3	58
	Gateway High	Beiber	12	1
	Community Day	Beiber	Various	1
<b>Fort Sage Unified</b>	Herlong Junior/Senior High	Herlong	K-12	394
<b>Janesville Union District</b>	Janesville	Janesville	K-8	450
<b>Johnstonville District</b>	Johnstonville Elementary	Johnstonville	K-8	240
<b>Lassen Union High School District</b>	Lassen High	Susanville	9-12	1,104
<b>Long Valley Charter</b>	Long Valley Charter	Doyle	K-8	199
<b>Juniper</b>	Juniper Elementary	Ravendale	K-8	8
<b>Juniper</b>	Ravendale/Termo Charter	Ravendale	Virtual K-12	1
<b>Richmond</b>	Richmond Elementary	Susanville	K-8	219
<b>Shaffer Union</b>	Shaffer Elementary	Litchfield	K-8	315
<b>Susanville</b>	Diamond View Middle	Susanville	7-8	300
	McKinley Elementary	Susanville	K-3	500
	Meadow View	Susanville	4-6	500
<b>Westwood Unified</b>	Westwood Charter	Westwood	K-12	397
	Fletcher Walker Elementary	Westwood	K-7	177
	Horizon High	Westwood	10-12	11
	Red River Community Day	Westwood	2-6	2
	Westwood High	Westwood	8-12	151

Source: Lassen County Office of Education and California Department of Education, 2009

**Lassen Community College** is located near Susanville and has a current enrollment of 2,327 registered part-time and full-time students (excluding prison population). The college has 477 registered full-time students (excluding prison population).



### TRENDS AND KEY ISSUES:

#### Infrastructure and Services

- Growth in most areas of the county is limited by the limited availability of centralized water and sewer service.

#### Water Availability/Quality

- Increased residential development in recent years has raised concerns about the long-term quality and viability of existing wells in some locations.

#### Sources:

Lassen County, 2009.

## Medical Facilities

The county's main medical care facilities are located in Susanville. The closest high-level health care facilities are in Reno, Nevada.

- **Banner Lassen Medical Center** in Susanville opened in 2003 and is a 25-bed facility
- **Lassen County Health and Social Services** (includes mental health services)
- **Lassen Family Urgent Care**
- **Northeastern Rural Health Clinics** is the major provider of outpatient care. NRHC operates a primary clinic in Susanville and a satellite clinic in Westwood.

## Water and Sewer

Most housing units in the Lassen County obtain water by individual wells or means other than a public system or private company. Likewise, most housing units have septic tanks or means of sewage disposal other than a public sewer system.

## Solid Waste Facilities

The Lassen Regional Solid Waste Management Authority manages solid waste operations in Lassen County. The Authority maintains two landfills and a number of transfer stations.

- **Bass Hill Landfill**
- **Westwood Landfill**
- **Transfer stations:** Herlong, Doyle, Wendel, Big Valley, Eagle Lake, and Little Valley

## Crime Prevention and Corrections

### LOCAL AGENCIES

Lassen County's Sheriff's Office is responsible for the prevention, detection, and investigation of crimes in the unincorporated areas of the county. The Sheriff's Department oversees the operation of the Lassen County Adult Detention Facility. The Susanville Police Department provides police services in the incorporated area of Susanville.

### STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

There are two state correctional facilities and one federal correctional institute located in Lassen County. High Desert State Prison and the California Correctional Center are state correctional institutions located within the city of Susanville's jurisdiction. The Federal Correctional Institute Herlong is a medium security correctional institution located in the Honey Lake Valley area.

# WHAT ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS EXIST IN LASSEN COUNTY?

## Fire Hazards

Fire protection in California is divided into responsibility areas, which include federal, state, and local authorities. These agencies have legal responsibility for fire protection in their areas, although coordination and cooperation between responsibility areas occurs. In addition to specifying fire protection responsibility areas, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) provides maps of Fire Hazard Severity Zones. These zones depict the potential fire hazard severity in state and local responsibility areas based on slope, weather and fuel loading. Zones range from moderate to very high, and also include non-wildland urban areas.

## Seismic Hazards

The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act, passed in 1972, requires local governments to regulate development activities in established Earthquake Fault Zones (regulatory zones around active faults). The Lassen County Earthquake Fault Zones are shown on the Environmental Hazards map. The most active faults in the area are the Honey Lake and Surprise Valley faults.

## Flood Hazards

Lassen County participates in the National Flood Insurance Program administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM's) show special flood hazard areas, also known as 100-year floodplain boundaries. The Lassen County FIRM's were adopted by FEMA in 1987, and are periodically updated and revised. The following Environmental Hazards map depicts the special flood hazard areas. Building permits and subdivision proposals that fall within the special flood hazard areas are subject to floodplain management regulations and review by the Department of Community Development.



### TRENDS AND KEY ISSUES:

#### Fire Safety/Protection

- In western portions of the study area, heavy timber around homes and narrow, unimproved roadways with single points of access have created a challenging environment for emergency vehicle access and fire protection.

#### Sources:

California Geological Survey, 2009.  
Lassen County