CHAPTER 14 – AGRICULTURE

Mission Statement
To analyze the agricultural base of the community including agricultural lands, farming activities, farm related businesses and the role of agriculture and agricultural uses in the community.

Discussion
Description of General Soils Characteristics: (Data from NRCS Soils Report)

Agricultural Soils
The Portneuf River area consists of a relatively narrow band of land immediately adjacent to the river channel:
1. **Inkom-Joevar soil type**: Very deep, moderately well-drained and well-drained soils that formed in silty alluvium and are located in floodplains and low terraces. This general soil type consists primarily of the McDole-McDole Variant complex on 0-2% slopes within floodplain areas adjacent to the Portneuf River. These soils are suited to irrigated (capability subclass IIc) and non-irrigated (capability subclass VIc) crops on a seasonal basis due to winter freezing and spring flooding potential. There are limited areas of this soil complex in the southern portion of the valley between Bannock Highway and the Portneuf River. There are two existing 18-hole golf courses (one public and one private) and numerous small acreage residential ownership and developments occupying this area. Irrigation water is not generally available.

The area from Interstate 86 on the north to Ross Park on the south and from the Portneuf River on the west to the base of the east bench area:
2. **Arimo-Downey-Bahem soil type**: Very deep, well-drained soils that formed in loess and silty alluvium overlying alluvial sand, gravel, cobbles and stones that are located on higher terraces. This general soil type consists primarily of the Urban land-Bahem-Broxon complex on 0-6% slopes. These soils are found predominantly within the urban development area of the City and are not assigned an agricultural capability classification.

Figure 155. The “church farm” owned and operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints located at the south end of the Portneuf Valley is the most visible farming operation in the area surrounding Pocatello.

Figure 156. Small urban farms are still found in and around the outlying areas of Pocatello.
The south valley area from Ross Park on the north to the Portneuf gap on the south and between the Portneuf River on the west to the base of the southeast bench area:

3. **Lava flows-McCarey-McCarey Variant soil type**: Lava flows, and moderately deep and shallow, well drained soils that formed in loess, silty alluvium and material weathered from basalt that are located on exposed lava flows and the overlying terraces. The lava flows are areas of exposed lava formations (basalt cliffs and outcroppings). The McCarey-McCarey Variant is composed of the Portino-Thornock soil complex on 0%-2% slopes. These terrace areas are naturally dominated by sagebrush, shrubs and grasses that have historically provided limited rangeland grazing and are not considered suitable for cultivation. This area consists of a mix of public and private uses and development activities interspersed with small acreage undeveloped parcels of land. These soils have a capability subclass of VIs.

The east bench area from the northern city limits to Barton Road and the west bench area from Highway 30 to Gibson Jack Creek:

4. **Ririe-Rexburg-Lanoak soil type**: Very deep, well drained soils that formed in loess and in silty alluvium derived from loess that are located on upper terraces and foothills. This general soil type is composed of Pocatello silt loam soils on 4%-20% slopes. These soils are subject to erosion and have a capability subclass ranging from IVe to VIe. These terrace and foothill areas are bisected by numerous natural drainage ways composed of Broncho Variant-Pocatello Complex soils on 20%-50% slopes. While the Pocatello silt loam soils are suitable for crops (wheat, barley and alfalfa) and rangeland, irrigation is not typically available. Due to population growth, these terrace areas (locally referred to as Pocatello’s “bench” areas) have mainly been the focus of home-site development.

The east foothills area and southwest foothills:

5. **Cedarhill-Ireland soil type**: Very deep and moderately deep, well-drained calcareous soils that formed in alluvium colluvium, and residuum derived from limestone, dolomite, and related rock and are located on foothills and lower mountain slopes. This soil type is composed of a wide variety of soils including:

   A. Cedarhill-Ririe-Watercanyon Complex (capability subclass VIIe on 30%-60% slopes);
   B. Hondo-Arbone Complex (capability subclass IIIe on 4%-12% slopes);
   C. Pocatello silt loam (capability subclass IVe-VIe on 1%-20% slopes);
   D. Ririe silt loam (capability subclass IIIe-IIIc on 1%-12% slopes);
E. Ririe-Watercanyon Complex (capability subclass IIIe-IIIc on 4%-12% slopes); and

F. Broncho Variant-Ririe-Pocatello Complex (capability subclass VIIe-VIIc on 20%-50% slopes).

These soils have varying suitability as rangeland with islands of soils suitable for limited crop use (wheat, barley or irrigated alfalfa). Some of these areas were developed predominantly under Bannock County’s rural residential standards and subsequently annexed into the City. Other areas were annexed into the City prior to development as low-density residential developments.

The NRCS soils data identifies three soil types found within the City as “prime farmland”. The three prime farmland soils are:

1. McDole-McDole Variant associated with Portneuf River floodplain;
2. Portneuf silt loam on 1%-4% slopes; and
3. Ririe silt loam on 1%-4% slopes.

In summary, due to historic and existing development patterns, the City does not have an agricultural land base within the City limits. The combination of topographic issues, soil types, climate and the general lack of abundant water for irrigation severely limits the ability to provide and promote commercial agricultural land uses and farming activities within the City. The City does have several transitional areas consisting of small acreage lot residential developments with limited agricultural activities (horses, domestic livestock, truck-gardens, etc.) conducted on an urban scale.
Irrigation
Portions of the City are located within the original boundary of the Fort Hall Irrigation Project, which brought irrigation water into the valley. A portion the main canal located along the northeastern side of the valley still exists and provides irrigation water, via laterals, to areas in the north and northwestern part of the City. The irrigation water user base has changed significantly over the years due to urban development patterns. Some irrigation water is still available and used for watering yards and pastures on large lots to small acreage residential properties.

Farm Related Businesses
Pocatello’s location in Southeastern Idaho places it in close proximity with extensive and productive agricultural lands. This centralized location in combination with being the hub rail connection and with the interstate highway connections supports several important agricultural shipping and processing businesses.

The following farm related businesses operate facilities in Pocatello: General Mills, Inc. Procurement Division grain storage and shipping elevators and the Great Western Malting Company grain storage and shipping facility. In addition, farm-related equipment dealers and trucking companies provide support for local and regional farming activities. Other farm related businesses in the City include farm and agricultural supply retail stores and a local farmers market held on a seasonal basis to provide an outlet for locally grown and marketed farm products.

Role of Agriculture
The direct influence of agricultural lands, activities and businesses located within the City of Pocatello is fairly minor when compared to the direct and indirect influences of regional agricultural lands, activities and businesses. The southeastern region of the State is a significant source of agricultural lands and activities and Pocatello is the “gate” through which these products and commodities are processed and transported. This includes raw mineral extraction and processing into fertilizers, cattle production, and a wide variety of crops including potatoes, sugar beets, corn, wheat, barley, oats and alfalfa.
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Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture

Community gardens and domestic “backyard” gardens are becoming more common and generally provide opportunities for families to grow their own food for personal consumption. Community gardens are typically small in scale and occur on vacant lots or other unused plots of land within the city. The garden plots are shared by multiple families and serve as sources of fresh vegetables, herbs, berries, fruits and ornamentals. Community gardens also provide opportunities for social interaction and reconnecting people to some farming experiences and skills for growing their own food.

Urban agriculture is local farming on a larger scale than community gardens and is generally commercial in nature. These small scale farms provide fresh locally-grown produce to the community where consumers buy directly from the farm at local farm stands or through local farmers markets. Adequate land area for these types of operations is typically very limited within the urban city limits. Therefore, they are normally found in rural areas within close proximity to the local urban market.

Community gardens, backyard gardens and local urban agriculture provide multiple benefits to our community. The nutritional benefits of locally-grown freshly harvested products are considered superior to some of the traditional commercial food sources. Families supplement their food buying and consumption with produce that they have grown, harvested and processed. Local urban agriculture increases community access to fresh local farm products and contributes to the local economy. Local agriculture also helps significantly reduce the enormous cost (both fiscally and environmentally) of transporting farmed goods in North America. The most commonly cited statistic for the United States is that food travels on average 1,500 miles from farm to consumer. Community gardens, backyard gardens and local urban agriculture also provide a source of fresh produce for local community charitable organizations. Access to community gardens and local urban farms provides educational opportunities for children and adults to learn how food is grown.
Goal 1.

Promote the protection of the agricultural land, the farming base and related businesses in the Portneuf River Valley area.

OBJECTIVE

1.1 Ensure that the agricultural land, farm activities and farm-related businesses that contribute to the economic diversity and the economic viability of the area continue to provide for and support future generations.

POLICY

a. Support the protection of prime farmland agricultural soils.
b. Protect and promote agricultural activities.
c. Encourage development that is designed to protect existing agricultural uses.
d. Promote and encourage agriculture-related businesses.
e. Encourage community gardening and promote the Farmer’s Market.

Goal 2.

Support sources for locally-grown fresh food through community gardens, domestic backyard gardens, urban agriculture and local farmers markets.

OBJECTIVE

2.1 Encourage the availability of fresh locally-grown produce for personal consumption and direct farm to consumer sales at farm stands and local farmers markets.
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES

POLICY

a. Encourage neighborhood groups to organize and create community gardens.

b. Support the use of plots of land suitable for community gardens and urban agriculture.

c. Support community activities that provide alternatives to local growers and consumers from traditional large-scale commercial operations.

d. Promote the concept of “grow local, buy local” to support the local economy.

“...agriculture, the only honest way, wherein man receives a real increase of the seed thrown into the ground, in a kind of continual miracle, wrought by the hand of God in his favor, as a reward for his innocent life and his virtuous industry.”

~ Benjamin Franklin