

Geography

The bulk of the City of Hailey lies in Sections 9, 10, 15, 16, 22, 23, Township 2 North, Range 18 East, Boise Meridian. State Highway 75 runs SE to NW through the city, with Ketchum 11 miles to the north and Twin Falls 75 miles to the south. Hailey is the county seat for Blaine County.

The Hailey city boundaries are constantly changing. At present, the City lies primarily on the valley floor with development beginning to reach up nearby drainages running perpendicular to the valley floor.

Topography

A topographical discussion of an area normally includes such aspects as general elevations, ground slopes and natural drainage patterns. All of these play a major role in shaping land use, population growth and population density. They also influence the development and cost of public utilities and facilities. Topography dictates the boundaries of natural drainage basins and flood plains that are an essential part of the approach to long-range planning. Topographic contours within the City of Hailey and surrounding area are shown on Figure 1.

Topographically, Hailey is located within the narrow valley of the Big Wood River. The width of the valley floor is approximately 1.5 miles within the Hailey area. The hillsides in this region normally range between 35% and 40% in slope, with the valley floor ranging from 0-10% in slope from the river to the base of the hills. In the vicinity around Hailey, the peaks are 1,200 – 2,200 feet above the principal stream valleys.

Geology

There are several geologic characteristics of an area that play a significant role in the consideration for all types of development and construction of utilities, buildings, and open space. The most important of these are surface features, subsurface strata including rock formations and soil types.

Geologic formations in the Hailey area include Challis volcanic and pre-tertiary rocks. The area around Hailey is formed of igneous, basaltic, and glacial deposits. The Wood River Valley is characteristic of river deposited gravels.

Soil Characteristics

Typical of alluvial and glacial areas, the Big Wood River Valley has a wide variety of soil types. Hailey can, however, be characterized into two predominate soil associations, Little Wood gravely loam and Hutton gravely loam. The Hutton series is a somewhat poorly drained clay loam.

The 1991 Soil Survey of Blaine County Area, Idaho is a detailed guide for the purposes of planning specific sites.

General Climatic Conditions

Hailey, at an elevation of 5,330 feet, has a yearly average temperature of 43.5 degrees F. The recorded record high for Hailey is 109° F., and record low of minus 36° F. Hailey has

considerable wind exposure resulting from canyon winds in the lower county from lack of mountain enclosure. Frost-free days number around 90 in the Hailey vicinity, and the lower valley is usually free of snow by May.

Precipitation

Hailey averages about 16.2 inches of precipitation a year. The least precipitation can be expected in July, while most occurs in December and January, with an average annual snowfall of 78.2 inches.

Hydrology

The hydrologic characteristics of an area influence the location, construction and design of developments and the operation of facilities and utilities such as municipal wells and distribution locations and sewage collection and treatment facilities.

The City of Hailey presently receives its domestic water supply from Indian Creek Spring, and six wells drilled into the ground water. The flow for each is shown in Table 2. Hydrologic sensitivity is high for the six wells and Hailey has therefore developed a Comprehensive Wellhead Protection Plan.

Surface Water

The main watercourse in the area is the Big Wood River. The principal source of water for the river is spring runoff from snow melt, with high flows occurring from April through July. The mean annual flow at Hailey is estimated to be 316,000 acre feet per year with volumes varying from 123,000 acre feet to 609,000 acre feet at the Hailey gauge station. The water quality is generally excellent and suitable for domestic and agricultural uses. The Big Wood River has been designated by the Department of Environmental Quality as a "Special Resource water."

The largest flood on record occurred on May 21, 2006. On that date a peak discharge of 7,800 cubic feet per second (cfs) was measured at Hailey. The largest flood previously was on May 25, 1967 with a peak discharge of 4,790 cfs. Duration of flood periods may be on the order of a month or more for large floods.

Ground Water

The principal groundwater aquifer in the study area is the course permeable alluvium which overlies the impermeable volcanic and well consolidated sedimentary rocks in the valley floor. It is estimated by the U.S. Geological Survey that the groundwater flow past Hailey is about 34,000 acre feet per year. The analysis of groundwater samples show the waters to be moderately hard to hard, and of high quality suitable for domestic and agricultural purposes.

Wildlife

Wildlife populations and habitats are diminished by the encroachment of civilization. Local policies in conjunction with the County and State Fish and Game Department can assist in preserving wildlife values. At present, the City of Hailey is not in conflict with any deer or elk migration corridors or winter range areas. However, as expansion occurs in nearby drainages and canyons, migration routes and winter ranges may be encroached upon and should be respectfully addressed and protected at the proper time.

The destruction of fisheries and streamside habitat by development in flood prone areas is discussed in the Hazardous Areas; Natural Resources; and Special Sites, Areas and Features sections of this Plan. Increased attention directed toward flood plain management policies and implementation of recreational facilities which seek to preserve the natural character of the area are of major importance.

Vegetation

The Hailey area can be classified as a semi-arid desert zone; Hailey is in Zone 4 for cold-hardiness. Little native vegetation still exists within the City limits, although there are certain areas of relatively undisturbed vegetation on hillsides surrounding the City and in some floodplain and wetland areas. The urban forest includes many introduced species of trees. Diversity in tree species is encouraged, and the City has published a Tree Selection and Planting Guide to further that goal.

Historic Development¹

The town's founder, John Hailey, was an early pioneer in the Northwest who took part in the Boise Basin Gold Rush in 1862. Betting that the Wood River Valley was going to be a center of mining and commercial activity, Hailey filed a homestead of the future townsite in 1879. Calling themselves the Hailey Town Company, Hailey, A.H. Boomer, U.S. Marshal E.S. Chase, and W.T. Riley had the townsite surveyed April 20, 1881 and officially platted at the county seat in Rocky Bar on May 10, 1881. The speculation paid off. By July 6, \$30,000 worth of lots had been sold. On August 24, 1882, the townsite was amended, expanding from 72 blocks to 140 blocks.

Hailey was a social center for the area with the opening of the Hailey Hot Springs Hotel and rapidly expanding business and residential areas. Then came the big fire of 1889, which destroyed the entire business section. Little time passed before the town was rebuilt and, according to Mrs. J.C. Fox, "Hailey now is a city of attractive homes. It is the gateway to the Switzerland of America."

The annexation process has continued throughout Hailey's history, reaching a peak with the Woodside extension to the south in the 1970s and the Northridge addition in the 1980s. The original Old Town plat, however, remains the heart of the town.

¹ Much of this information was taken from the 1992 "Historic Hailey" brochure