

Originally, Elmore County was part of the vast Alturas County, Idaho, which was created by the First Territorial Legislature of Idaho on December 1863. Alturas County included all of the land north of the Snake River from the mouth of the Bruneau River to Little Lost River and as far north as the Sawtooth Mountains.

In 1889, the last Territorial Legislature of Idaho divided Alturas County creating several smaller counties including Elmore County. The first county seat was established in Emerald and later moved to Rocky Bar. In 1890, it was moved to Mountain Home. Several townships were annexed to Elmore County from Owyhee County in 1931. These townships are located in the southwestern part of the County north of the Snake River.

Elmore County is bounded on the north by the North Fork of the Boise River, part of the Sawtooth Mountains, and Boise County. Custer, Blaine, Camas, Gooding, and Twin Falls Counties border on the east boundary. On the southern boundary are the Snake River and Owyhee County; and on the west border is Ada County. Over half of the County is mountainous (northern part), while the southern portion is part of the Snake River Plains.

The northern region of the County is dominated by the Sawtooth Mountains, with the Boise Front Mountains in the mid-section of the County. South of the Boise Mountains are the Teton Mountains and the western edge of the Soldier Mountains. Danskin Mountain on the west and Bennett Mountain on the east form the Foothill Mountains immediately north of the Snake River Plains. The County is the major drainage for the Boise River, having most of the South Fork, all of Middle Fork, and half of the North Fork of the Boise River within its boundaries.

Altitudes vary from 2,300 feet south along the Snake River to 10,659 feet in the northern portion of the County. This difference in altitude results in a wide range of climate: from less than 8 inches of moisture in the southern part of the County to an average of 25 inches in the northern regions. Most areas experience dry summers. The temperatures vary from 100° in the south during the summer months to more than 50 degrees below zero in the winter to the north.

There are approximately 1,971,200 acres of land in the County, of which over 18,900 acres are covered by water. 522,354 acres or twenty six percent (26%) of the County is privately owned. Over six percent (6%) of Elmore County land or 120,355 acres is state owned. 1,327,041 acres or sixty seven percent (67%) of Elmore County land is federally owned.

Early accounts of the area tell of gold and silver strikes and of many frustrations. Gold was discovered in 1863 at Rocky Bar and in 1864 at Atlanta. The rugged terrain and the distance that ore had to be hauled made the Atlanta gold expensive. Rocky Bar/Featherville area had an easier time getting their gold out.

Aside from the mining communities, the first permanent settlements in Elmore County began in 1885 when the Union Pacific Railroad, then called the Oregon Short Line, built its main line across the southern part of the County. The railroad stimulated agriculture and Elmore County became one of the leading stock-raising counties of Idaho. Mountain Home, the County seat, was moved from its location on Rattlesnake Creek, where it emerged from the foothills, to its present location on the railroad line. It was a small community until the advent of the Mountain Home Air Force Base, when it began to develop. Mountain Home continued to grow until 1963 when construction was completed on several missile sites within the area. The community has experienced steady growth since 1967.

Glenns Ferry was the railroad town in the County for many years. For generations it served as a terminal crew change point for the Union Pacific Railroad. In 1964, agricultural development near Glenns Ferry started to take place with the advent of high lift pumps that could irrigate crops on the high benches south of the Snake River. As more agriculture developed, the town became less dependent on the railroad jobs and more dependent on agriculture.

Mountain Home Air Force Base located ten miles southwest of Mountain Home was established in 1943 as a heavy bomber (B-24) training base. It was deactivated in December 1945, after World War II, then reactivated again as a training site for the Military Air Transport Service and equipped with B-29s. This mission continued until May 1953, when the base became the home of the 9th Strategic Bombardment Wing, Strategic Air Command (SAC).

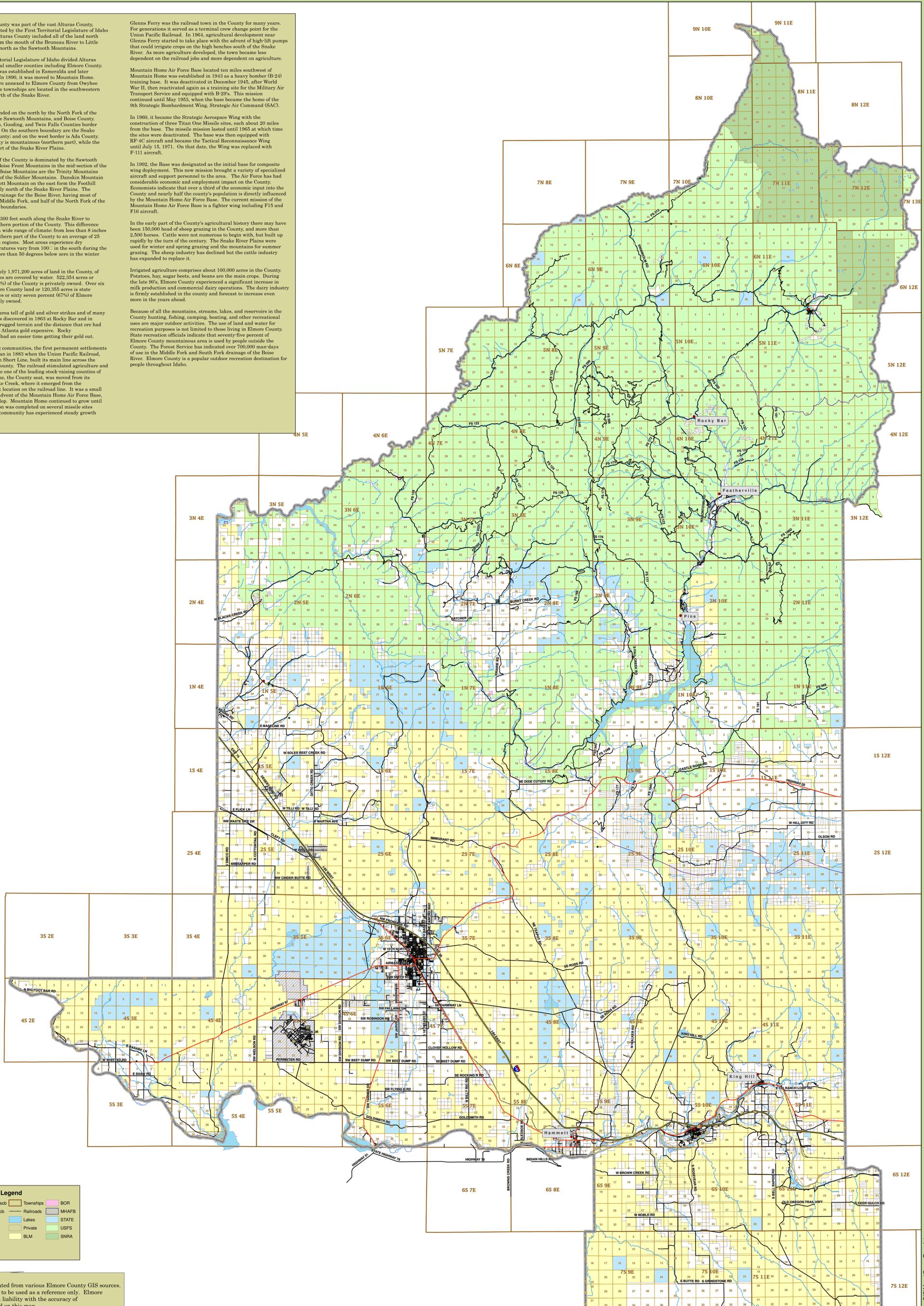
In 1960, it became the Strategic Aerospace Wing with the construction of three Titan One Missile sites, each about 20 miles from the base. The missile mission lasted until 1965 at which time the sites were deactivated. The base was then equipped with RF-4C aircraft and became the Tactical Reconnaissance Wing until July 15, 1971. On that date, the Wing was replaced with F-111 aircraft.

In 1992, the Base was designated as the initial base for composite wing deployment. This new mission brought a variety of specialized aircraft and support personnel to the area. The Air Force has had considerable economic and employment impact on the County. Economists indicate that over a third of the economic input into the County and nearly half the county's population is directly influenced by the Mountain Home Air Force Base. The current mission of the Mountain Home Air Force Base is a fighter wing including F15 and F16 aircraft.

In the early part of the County's agricultural history there may have been 150,000 head of sheep grazing in the County, and more than 2,500 horses. Cattle were not numerous to begin with, but built up rapidly by the turn of the century. The Snake River Plains were used for winter and spring grazing and the mountains for summer grazing. The sheep industry has declined but the cattle industry has expanded to replace it.

Irrigated agriculture comprises about 100,000 acres in the County. Potatoes, hay, sugar beets, and beans are the main crops. During the late 90's, Elmore County experienced a significant increase in milk production and commercial dairy operations. The dairy industry is firmly established in the county and forecast to increase even more in the years ahead.

Because of all the mountains, streams, lakes, and reservoirs in the County hunting, fishing, camping, boating, and other recreational uses are major outdoor activities. The use of land and water for recreation purposes is not limited to those living in Elmore County. State recreation officials indicate that seventy-five percent of Elmore County mountainous area is used by people outside the County. The Forest Service has indicated over 700,000 man-days of use in the Middle Fork and South Fork drainage of the Boise River. Elmore County is a popular outdoor recreation destination for people throughout Idaho.



Legend

- landmap_elmore_uscb
- physical_elmore_uscb
- County Boundary
- Cities
- Interstate
- Major Roads
- Minor Roads
- Townships
- Railroads
- Lakes
- Private
- BLM
- SNRA
- BOR
- MHAFB
- STATE
- USFS

Notes:
 1. This map was created from various Elmore County GIS sources. This map is intended to be used as a reference only. Elmore County cannot accept liability with the accuracy of information portrayed on this map.

Elmore County, Idaho

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