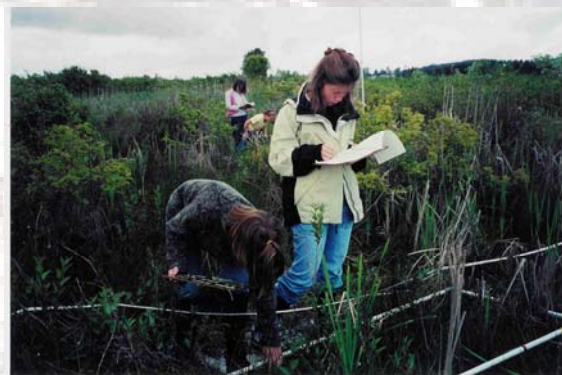



BALANCING WHAT PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT NEED TO THRIVE NOW AND IN THE FUTURE



Benton County
Sustainability Accomplishments
2001 - 2006



The Benton County Sustainability Report is possible through the dedication of individual employees and Benton County Government's commitment to serve as a model for practices that support and sustain the environment, economy, and social needs.

Special thanks and recognition go out to the report's many contributors and to the Sustainability Network for continuing to improve the way we do business.

BALANCING WHAT PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT NEED TO THRIVE

Benton County models sustainability in the community - it's the way we do business that matters. It's education. It's recognition of employees, citizens, and businesses making a difference; and it's setting policies and practices that move us forward.

That means caring for the environment, economy, and social needs.

CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT - *Benton County is a beautiful place to live and we keep it that way.*

- **Natural Areas and Parks** - A robust program with an ecosystem approach to conservation and a process that benefits nature and citizens. Benton County works collaboratively with the public, landowners, stakeholders, natural resource agencies, local organizations, and volunteers; and with the support of federal and state funding, and other investments. The County incorporates species conservation into local land use planning and facilitates economic growth and development. More than 35 thoughtful years of stewardship have been dedicated to land acquisition, planning, and development of the present Benton County Natural Areas and Park system. Today, Benton County's Natural Areas & Parks Department is responsible for managing 1,418 acres of public lands including natural areas, open space, historic sites, wetlands, day-use parks, and campgrounds.
- **Reduce** - Benton County and its employees have taken important steps to reduce negative environmental impacts and to sustain local resources. Among the notable efforts made are: requiring computers countywide be turned off at night to save energy and reduce costs;



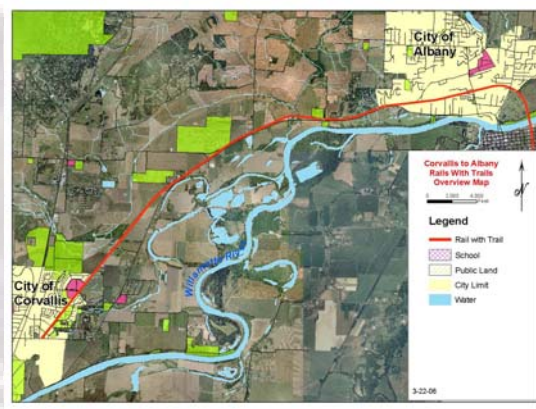
using less expensive laser printers instead of inkjets or desk jets; putting lights in Benton County buildings on automatic shut-off when rooms are not in use; using digital photos instead of film; conducting energy and building audits; using energy efficient lighting and "Green Power," by purchasing electricity generated from landfill methane gas through Consumer Power (Turbine Project); and remodeling the Fairgrounds Gerber Building to meet "green building" codes with low Volative Organic Chemicals (V.O.C., which are lower emission, more environmentally-safe chemicals in paint and products), sustainable materials, recycled products, low-mercury lamps, and motion sensors.

- **Reuse** - Material and supply reuse is common practice for Benton County employees. Many save resources and money by finding a second use for materials rather than discarding them. Benefiting the community and highlighting the creative ways to stretch the usefulness of materials, Benton County Public Works reused an older bridge structure to create an access trail bridge in McDonald Forest. This grant-funded project remains important to community members and demonstrates collaboration between Benton County and Oregon State University. Another effort to reduce the amount of waste that reaches our local landfills includes reusing furniture internally or donating to nonprofit organizations. Other actions that fit in line with Benton County's commitment to reuse include reprocessing ground asphalt for re-paving roads (50 percent of overlay projects, such as Soap Creek Road, include reused asphalt); Natural Areas and Parks Department reusing timber from bridges for projects (foot bridge at Beazell Memorial Forest); scrapping metal for money; reusing packing materials and rip-rap for soil stabilization.
- **Recycle** - From the organization to the individual, recycling is an every-day habit at Benton County. Everything from paper to ink cartridges, bottles, cans, plastics, batteries, compost garbage, oil (selling back used oil), and antifreeze is recycled. The County promotes waste reduction and recycling among other local agencies through Landfill Host Surcharge grants. Past grant awards have gone to schools, furniture shares, environmental or recycling centers, and Habitat for Humanity to name a few.
- **Motor pool** - Admittedly a highly visible contributor to air and noise pollution, Benton County continues to make strides to reduce



the impact of its fleet on the environment. The County has been replacing worn vehicles when no longer viable, integrating the use of electric/gasoline hybrids in its fleet and purchasing bio-diesel fuel in cooperation with the City of Corvallis to save on costs. Fuels such as ethanol and bio-diesel are recycled. The Parole and Probation Division of the Sheriff's Office purchased more economical, fuel efficient 4-cylinder sedans; and the Benton County Natural Areas & Parks Department uses 4-cycle (rather than 2-cycle) equipment to reduce noise and air pollution.

- **Protecting the forest ecosystem** - Benton County's Forest Patrol is vigilant about the theft of forest resources such as moss, salal, trees and other vegetation on national, state and private lands within the County. Efforts to protect the County's forestlands from theft allows all community members to enjoy the natural beauty of Benton County and helps to preserve it for future generations to come.
- **"Rails to Trails"** - In 1995, the Benton County Parks System Comprehensive Plan recommended expansion of existing and future recreational opportunities within the County, and for several years the Benton County Natural Areas and Parks Department has worked to develop a trails plan in collaboration with landowners, volunteers, nonprofit groups, and partnering agencies. Efforts to determine what the community values in a trail system resulted in a Trail System Plan that was adopted by Benton County Commissioners in 2003. One proposal is the formation of bike and pedestrian paths adjacent to train tracks between the cities of Albany and Corvallis (the "Rails to Trails" project), linking urban areas to public open space lands.
- **Keeping railroads open** - Commissioners are working to keep the railroad rights-of-way functional, to encourage rail shipment of goods and in turn reduce truck traffic on local highways, the need for fossil fuels, and air pollution.
- **Single tree selection** harvesting at Beazell Memorial Forest (the 580-acre, self-sufficient home of the Taylor's Checkerspot (a rare



butterfly), and removing fir species to restore oak savannah at Fort Hoskins Historic Park are integral to Benton County's stewardship approach to managing its natural areas.

- **Modifying comprehensive plans** - Benton County recognizes the importance of sustainability practices in building, farming, and forestland management with policies contained in the new Benton County Comprehensive Plans.

ECONOMY - *A healthy economy provides good jobs and homes for all levels of society and a place for businesses to prosper in harmony with the environment.*



- **Benton Fish Passage Improvement Program** - Benton County works not only for its citizens, but the local environment as well. The byproduct of this effort is more jobs. Working to restore and improve local fish passageways, Public Works and its Geographic Information Systems, as well as and Benton Soil & Water Conservation District are working together to remove barriers to migrating fish. The holistic approach to restoration aims to improve local fish habitats and access to their ancestral spawning grounds. This groundbreaking restoration plan is under consideration for state adoption due to its success.
- **Promoting a "buy local" philosophy** - Benton County promotes local economic vigor by buying locally when feasible and cost effective.
- **Working for local economic development** - Benton County, with four representatives, is a member of the Corvallis/Benton County Economic Development Partnership. The County also is active in the Economic Vitality Partnership, a consortium of 14 business, government, and social service organizations dedicated to local economic development. The goal of both organizations is to increase collaboration and improve economic development services to the community, helping to provide an environment for local businesses to succeed. Part of this effort to plan for the area's economic future is partnering with the community to understand what is important to us when it comes to economic health.

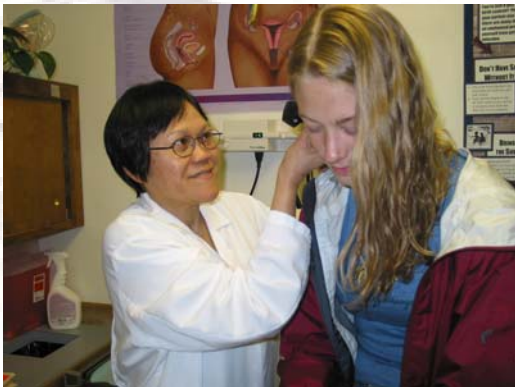
- **Supporting microenterprises and promoting livable and viable communities** - Benton County sponsors the successful Linn-Benton Microenterprise Program through Corvallis Neighborhood Housing Services. These programs create opportunity for people in low-wage jobs to supplement their income through self-employment.
- **Alsea Community Center and Library**
 - Benton County sponsored the successful \$300,000 Community Development Block Grant that provided half of the funding for construction of the new center, replacing the old blighted building. Circulation and visits to the library have increased.
- **Partnering for a more effective, cost-efficient local government** - Always examining ways to stretch tax dollars further, Benton County has formed a number of partnerships to prudently provide quality community services. Partnering with the City of Corvallis, Benton County purchases gasoline by the bulk for its fleet, saving on expenses while continuing to keep necessary machines, trucks, and equipment running. Additionally, Public Works crews perform maintenance on the Corvallis and Albany fire fighting equipment, creating efficiencies, and sustaining other Public Works' programs and services.
- **Supporting Oregon State University Extension Service** - The Benton County office of the OSU Extension Service's agricultural programs teach local farmers techniques that help them remain competitive in global markets and retain the long term productivity of land for future generations. Small farm faculty work with family farms to produce and sell produce to local restaurants and farmers' markets, helping support a more self-sufficient community. Applied research on Benton County's leading crop, Christmas trees, has led to a new nutrient management guide to help growers reduce fertilizer use and maintain crop yields resulting in reduced costs and fewer impacts on the environment. Forest managers benefit from an array of Extension programs, including information on how they can "green certify" their operations, giving them positive environmental and marketing benefits.



Making Benton County a better place to live now and in the future through wise choices.

- **Showing by example how sustainable practices make smart business sense while reaping environmental benefits** - Benton County has integrated the use of Direct Digital Controls (DDC) for heating/ventilating, which eliminates unnecessary traveling, increases efficiency, and optimizes energy use by noting when someone is using an area. DDC was introduced in 1989 and the County is working to bring the energy efficient technology to its buildings. In addition to DDCs, the County has begun to use Variable Frequency Drives (VFD), which uses DDC to control heating, cooling, and ventilation sensors to vary use based on demand while systems are up and running. Sensors cut back when areas are vacant, which saves the County about 15-16 percent per month on average in energy costs.
- **Alternate transportation** - All Benton County employees are encouraged to use County-purchased transit passes (supporting the local transportation infrastructure), County errand bicycles, and carpools/vanpools to reduce environmental impacts. Both Eugene and Corvallis have the highest bike user rates in the state.

MEETING SOCIAL NEEDS - *Our culture is important and we take pride in a diverse society that takes care of its own. To meet these needs and promote social justice, Benton County uses its resources efficiently, fairly, and responsibly so current and future needs of all people are adequately*



addressed. The County builds and maintains long-term working relationships, provides programs and services to diverse communities, and prioritizes prevention and early intervention when allocating resources. Research indicates that for every \$1 spent on prevention there is a savings of \$5 - \$6 in future health and public safety services.

- **Meeting community needs** - The Benton Community Health Center, which provides high-quality health care services to underserved people, was made possible through its designation and grant award as a

federally qualified health center. Medical, dental, and mental health services are offered at affordable prices, helping to improve the quality of life in our area. There are now three locations throughout Benton County working to meet the high need in our community for affordable health care.

- **Looking out for employee well being** - To focus on the health and well being of each individual working at Benton County, the Worksite Wellness Program is teaching employees healthy habits. Employees have learned how to improve their personal lifestyles by



incorporating healthier habits - such as eating more fruits and vegetables - into their routines and being aware of health risks such as strokes. Additionally, employees are encouraged to take advantage of the Benton Community Health Center where services are available to them and their family members, just as they are to the community at-large.

- **Benton County is a strong advocate of individual health!** The *Healthy Active Community Environments Project*, led by an interdisciplinary partnership within Benton County Government, is an innovative strategy using policy and environmental change to increase physical activity. The mission is to "Foster and promote a Benton County community conducive to daily physical activity for the health of all Benton County residents." Current projects include covered bicycle racks at three County buildings, County errand bicycles for employees and an incentives program to car/vanpool. The Benton County office of the OSU Extension Service's 125 Master Gardeners annually assists thousands of local residents with garden and landscape issues. Families are encouraged to produce food in their gardens that is fresh, healthy, and produced locally. Nutrition programs provide information on how to prepare healthy meals for families and make the most of limited funds.
- **Helping youth** - The Juvenile Department provides a continuum of prevention, supervision and rehabilitation services to youth and families with the goals of protecting the community, holding youth accountable for their actions, and helping youth develop competency. The department places a high priority on prevention. The more we are

able to support and create healthier families, the less likely we are to see repeat offenders come through the system. This strengthens the community's ability to repair the harm caused by crime in the future. With many partners, including other County departments, Benton County has developed a strong community-based system of juvenile justice that promotes social justice through "restorative justice programs," evidence-based practices, and collaboration in work programs. The philosophy that wrap-around services will help meet the needs of families in their everyday lives is woven throughout the program. The department is a strong environmental partner. It participated in the GET SMART Resource Efficiency Program and is implementing recommendations to become more energy efficient.

- **Caring about children** - America's Promise named Benton County and Corvallis in the top 100 communities for Kids. And for a second time, Benton County, through the work of the Commission on Children and Families, has been ranked the No. 1 county in Oregon for child well being (and No. 3 for economy) by the Oregon Progress Board, which monitors the progress of each county in meeting state benchmarks. Benton County earned the No. 1 ranking for child well being by meeting or exceeding state benchmarks for providing accessible prenatal care; and for preventing child abuse, teen pregnancy, tobacco use during pregnancy and eighth grade students' use of tobacco and alcohol. The Commission on Children and Families works with local agencies and nonprofits to ensure that Benton County remains a safe, livable community for its youth.
- **Mental Health** - A Mental Health Task force is looking at alternatives to jail for recurrent, mentally ill offenders to address needs and break the cycle of repeat incarceration. The Task Force is examining housing options and other community supports and services that can be more effectively and efficiently coordinated in a comprehensive systems approach to serving these individuals.



- **Efficient use of taxpayer resources** - The Benton County Sheriff's Office continues to work with the Corvallis Police Department to create efficiencies, such as records consolidation, response coverage,

common policies, a joint street crimes team, and joint training, and vehicle servicing and purchasing. By combining resources, both jurisdictions can more effectively serve the local community.

- **Partnering for community's preparedness** - Benton County's Emergency Management Team is working to build a disaster-resilient community with plans to minimize damage and maximize the ability to recover. Included are hazard mitigation plans, Benton-Linn emergency training program, coordination center, regional disaster exercises, public information resources and training, the National Incident Management System, and post-earthquake evaluation of buildings. Emergency Management also provides extensive public information outreach to promote and reinforce preparedness and mitigation programs and works with other community agencies and individuals to ensure emergency response resources are optimally used.

Looking to the future . . . Benton County will continue to make wise choices for the local environment today and into the future. Sustainability isn't a passing commitment to the present. It means each and every day conducting business in a manner that balances the needs of our organization with the impact to the environment. Benton County "walks the talk" by modeling good sustainability practices. We encourage county residents to develop and embrace their own sustainability goals.

