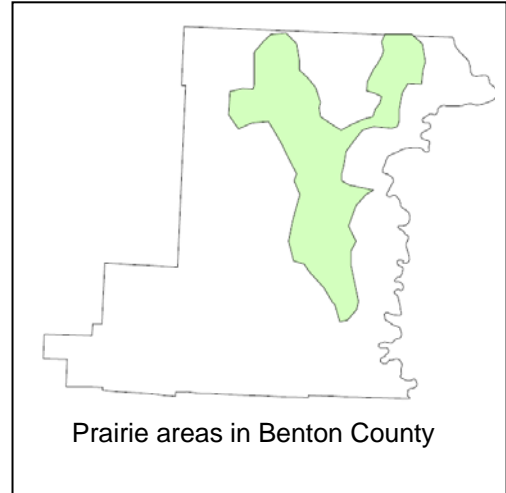




Frequently Asked Questions about Benton County's September 2009 Revised Draft Prairie Species Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

Where are prairies located in Benton County? How many endangered species are there in prairies in Benton County?

- Most Benton County prairie habitat is located in the central, northwest and northeast parts of the County (See map at right).
- One butterfly and four species of plants are listed under the Endangered Species Act in Benton County: Fender's blue butterfly, Kincaid's lupine, Willamette daisy, Nelson's checkermallow, and Bradshaw's lomatium (Chapter 2: Covered Species)
- One butterfly species, Taylor's checkerspot, is a candidate for listing and could be listed in the future.
- One plant, peacock larkspur, is listed by the state of Oregon as endangered and may become listed under the federal Endangered Species Act as well.



What are the benefits of the HCP?

As it stands today, many members of our community are not aware of Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections (see below). The HCP will help private landowners and the County comply with the Endangered Species Act.

- Without an HCP, if private landowners do something on their lands affecting listed species, a permit from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is required. This includes any ground disturbance activities on private lands, such as home construction.
- Without an HCP, any activities requiring a County permit (e.g., building permit) will need to demonstrate that there are no impacts to butterfly habitat, or that these impacts are permitted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which will require mitigation (restoration work to offset impacts to endangered species habitat).
- Without the HCP, if the County issues a permit resulting in impacts to Fender's blue butterfly and its habitat (including native nectar species and Kincaid's lupine, its host plant) without USFWS authorization, both the County and the landowner are liable under the Endangered Species Act.
- Without an HCP, the County would have to complete habitat surveys and consultations with the Oregon Department of Agriculture prior to every routine road maintenance activity (e.g., mowing, culvert cleaning), road approach (driveway) permit approval, or utility work activity in County right-of-way.

Why does Benton County want an HCP?

A HCP will allow the County to manage conservation of and impacts to endangered prairie species throughout the County with a long term plan. The County will receive an “Incidental Take Permit” from US Fish and Wildlife Service, and similar authorization from the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

- Private landowners can get a permit from the County for home, farm, and forest construction without separately going to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, as long as they comply with the provisions of the Plan (Chapter 8: Implementation, Figure 8.3, pg. 116).
- Mitigation for impacts on private land may be conducted in the most effective manner for long-term benefit to the species. Funding for this mitigation will be developed by Benton County.
- Potential impacts to species on public lands can be forecasted and planned for in advance. Impacts will be avoided, and where impacts are unavoidable, they will be mitigated.
- Conservation actions by public agencies and private parties can be coordinated for maximum conservation benefit.

What the HCP is not...

- It is not a Recovery Plan. The County and private landowners are not required by the HCP to implement the draft USFWS Recovery Plan for prairie species. However, this HCP strives to contribute to recovery (downlisting or de-listing) of covered prairie species through the implementation of the conservation measures.
- It will not facilitate subdivisions and commercial developments (Chapter 4: Covered Activities, pg. 40 & 53).
- It will not exempt all populations of endangered species from protection.
- It will not result in impacts to all covered plant and butterfly species in the County.
- It is not set in stone. This HCP can be modified and updated over its 50 year term.

What the HCP is:

The HCP is a tool to forecast and manage impacts to endangered species.

- This HCP is based upon up-to-date, on the ground surveys throughout the County identifying the current distribution of endangered species populations (Chapter 3: Plan Area, Figure 3.1, pg. 30).
- Scientific findings from studies conducted locally and globally have informed and shaped this HCP. Some examples:
 - Butterfly research shows that Fender’s blue butterfly needs specific plants for reproduction (host plants) and food (nectar plants). Research has also identified the distances butterflies will travel to find host plants and nectar plants (Chapter 5: Impacts, pg. 56). Local surveys have and continue to document the distribution of these plants. Protection of these resources is at the heart of this HCP.
 - Propagation and outplanting research on endangered plant species has been conducted. This work has resulted in clear recommendations for ways to establish new populations or add to existing populations. These techniques are

recommended for restoration and mitigation actions under the HCP (Appendix K. Plant Material Collection and Plant Introduction Protocols).

- Researchers from many areas have examined the relative benefits of conserving species in many small isolated patches vs. few, large sites and in general conclude populations persist best in larger preserves. This HCP emphasizes conservation and mitigation in larger, protected sites over small, fragmented locations.
- This HCP includes a Prairie Conservation Strategy (Appendix E. Prairie Conservation Strategy), which bridges the gap between managing impacts and conducting restoration on public and private lands toward species conservation and recovery. The Prairie Conservation Strategy includes a comprehensive list of voluntary conservation tools, including landowner incentives and opportunities.

Who is affected by this HCP?

- Private landowners in mapped Fender's Blue Zones (Fender's blue butterfly habitat zones- Chapter 5: Impacts: pg. 54, Map: Figure 5.1, Page 57) who seek a permit from the County may elect to obtain coverage under the County's HCP or work directly with US Fish and Wildlife Service. Private landowners outside of the Fender's Blue Zones will not be affected.
- Various non-federal public agencies (e.g., Benton County, City of Corvallis, ODOT, OSU) and non-governmental organizations (e.g., Greenbelt Land Trust and The Nature Conservancy) if they choose to participate (Chapter 3: Plan Area, Figure 3.1, pg. 30).

How will this work on private land? Will there be a fee?

- There will NOT be an added fee for private landowners seeking a permit from Benton County. The County will develop the needed funding for mitigation costs resulting from impacts on County and Private Lands (Chapter 8), Section 8.6 Implementation Costs and Funding (p. 122).
- Private landowners can also decide to work directly with US Fish and Wildlife Service and obtain an individual Incidental Take Permit. This process will take longer than signing on to the County's Incidental Take Permit, and will typically involve additional costs.

How will this work on public land?

- Most mitigation on public land is scheduled to be completed before impacts take place.
- Mitigations will occur in Prairie Conservation Areas (Appendix D: Maps of Prairie Conservation Areas) that will be managed for habitat protection in the long term.

Where and what degree of impacts are forecasted to occur?

- Most impacts to Fender's blue butterfly are expected on private lands (impacts to nectar and host plants) and roadsides (impacts to nectar plants). The cumulative total amount of habitat loss is forecasted at 2 acres of nectar plants and 0.10 acres of host lupines, and this impact is spread over ~8050 acres and ~11 mi of roadsides (Chapter 5: Impacts:-Table 5.1, pg. 55)
- Most impacts to covered plant species will be on roadsides in County rights-of-way resulting from transportation construction and maintenance activities. Roadside

populations have been prioritized for conservation based on features such as size and connectivity to other populations.

- A total of 2 Bradshaw's lomatium, 1 Willamette daisy, 56 peacock larkspur, 226 Nelson's checkermallow plants and ~ 8 square yards of Kincaid's lupine (outside of butterfly areas) are forecasted to be impacted (Chapter 5: Impacts, Table 5.1, pg 55)

Will damage to endangered species be mitigated?

- Yes, all unavoidable impacts will be mitigated (Chapter 6: Conservation Measures).
- Mitigation will be conducted with predefined ratios (how much is lost: how much is replaced) based on site quality, timing, and protections on the mitigation site (Chapter 6: Conservation Measures, pg. 89).
- Strict criteria will be used to determine mitigation success (Chapter 6: Conservation Measures, pg. 88).

How can I comment?

- The County has provided for a 30 day comment period on this draft (September 8-October 7, 2009). The US Fish and Wildlife Service will have a separate comment period once the draft HCP is submitted to them as part of the Incidental Take Permit application.
- A comment form will be available at the public meetings, or comments may be made in a letter or by email.
- Comments may be mailed to Benton County Natural Areas and Parks Department (360 SW Avery Avenue, Corvallis, OR 97333-1192), or emailed to hcpinfo@co.benton.or.us.

Will there be public meetings?

- During HCP development to date, the County has held five public meetings about the HCP.
- A public meeting about the September 2009 revised draft HCP is scheduled for:
 - Wednesday, September 16, 2009 at the Corvallis Public Library, 645 NW Monroe Avenue, 7-9 pm.

What happens next?

- Comments will be compiled and the draft HCP revised under the direction of the Benton County Board of Commissioners.
- The revised draft will be submitted to the US Fish and Wildlife Service along with an Environmental Assessment required under the National Environmental Policy Act. Additional public comment will be sought at that time (anticipated to be in 2010).

When will the HCP be completed?

- The final HCP is scheduled to be completed in 2010, and if approved, the Incidental Take Permit will likely be issued in 2011.

For more information, please visit the Benton County HCP website at:

<http://www.co.benton.or.us/parks/hcp>

or contact the Benton County Natural Areas & Parks Office at (541)766-6891