

**Benton County**  
**Habitat Conservation Plan**  
**Stakeholder Advisory Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**November 20, 2006**



**Attendees**

- Annabelle Jaramillo, Benton County Commissioner
- Jay Dixon, Benton County Commissioner
- Linda Modrell, Benton County Commissioner
- Bruce Taylor, OR Habitat Joint Venture, Defenders of Wildlife
- Carl Frounfelker, Siuslaw National Forest , USFS
- Stella Coakley, College Agricultural Sciences, OSU
- Susan Morre, Benton County Environmental Issues Advisory Board
- Dave Lysne, College of Forestry, OSU
- Nick Testa, Oregon Department of Transportation
- Jean Nath, Benton County Parks Advisory Board
- Karlene McCabe, Greenbelt Land Trust
- Steve-DeGhetto, City of Corvallis Parks & recreation
- Dave Buchanan, Tyee Wine Cellars
- Rich Szlemp,USFWS
- Rick Fletcher, OSU Ag extension- Benton County
- Matt Blakely-Smith, Native Plant Society of Oregon
- Rebecca Currin, Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Mike Cairns, Luckiamute Watershed Council
- Randy Moore, Representing Audobon Society, Corvallis, (OSU)
- Ann Kreager, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Bill Pearcy, Landowner
- P.K. McCoy, Landowner (for Dai Crisp)
- Ron Exeter, Salem BLM
- Gordon Cumming, Benton County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Karen Strohmeier, Cascade Pacific Resource Conservation Development
- Karen Fleck Harding, Mary's River Watershed Council
- Peter Dalke, Oregon Solutions
- Janine Salwasser, OSU library, MRWC, City?
- Dana Erickson, Long Tom River Watershed Council
- Mike Gallagher, Parametrix
- Janet Morlan, Department of State Lands
- George McAdams, Benton County Natural Areas and Parks
- Jerry Davis, HCP Project Manager
- Michelle Michaud, Carolyn Menke, Tom Kaye, IAE
- Sarah Swartzentruber, Americorp Volunteer, IAE (note taker)

**Welcome and Introductions (Annabelle Jaramillo)**

Annabelle welcomed and thanked all attending the meeting. Everyone in the room introduced themselves and gave their affiliation.

**Purpose of Meeting/Stakeholder Advisory Committee (Jerry Davis)**

Jerry mentioned that he is no longer working at Benton County Natural Areas and Parks, but continuing to manage this project for Benton County. He reported that the County recently had an extremely successful and useful Technical Advisory Committee meeting. Jerry pointed out that the development of a county-wide HCP is a new process in Oregon, and Annabelle indicated she had been told this was a unique process nationwide. The purpose of this project is to protect upland and wetland prairie species, and that Benton County is trying to promote the conservation side of the HCP process. The county estimates the development of the HCP will be about a 3-year process, with funding coming through the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The county is approximately 6 months into the process at this point. He indicated that the work began this spring with on the ground field assessments by Carolyn Menke from IAE.

Jerry introduced Tom Kaye, the Director of Institute for Applied Ecology (a local consultant hired to prepare the HCP). Tom introduced Carolyn Menke and Michelle Michaud, indicating they were taking the lead for IAE on this project. Carolyn's primary focus is field surveys and analysis, while Michelle's focus is the writing of the HCP document, however there is substantial overlap between the two. Tom also mentioned the recent Technical Advisory Committee meeting, explaining that the purpose of the TAC was to review the scientific and technical details of this process.

**HCP Presentation (Carolyn Menke)**

The HCP is a cooperative project between Benton County, IAE, Parametrix, USFWS and ODFW.

Why develop a HCP in Benton County? The County has significant amounts of rare species & prairie/savanna habitat, including 15-20% of Fender's Blue Populations, 100% of Oregon's Taylor's Checkerspot populations, and also supporting the Streaked Horned Lark, and four rare plant species: Kincaid's lupine, Nelson's checkermallow, Willamette daisy, and Bradshaw's lomatium. Benton County has about 7% of Willamette Valley ecoregion and 12% of remaining oak savanna & prairie. Much of this prairie habitat is on private land. Benton County also has many opportunities for public outreach, as there are many cooperative groups existing in Benton County. Benton County also includes a significant scientific and research base at Oregon State University, and there is recovery planning already in progress (prairie recovery plan) for most of the species (Willamette) basin wide.

The goal of the HCP is to create a stable future for sensitive species populations within the county AND associated habitats, and people living in or visiting the County.

The HCP will include the likely impacts to threatened & endangered species, the steps the county will take to avoid, minimize, and mitigate such impacts, the funding that will be made available from County for implementation of mitigating actions, and any alternative actions that were considered, and why they were rejected.

If the HCP is approved, the USFWS will issue an incidental take permit (ITP). The ITP will allow non-federal landowners to conduct activities that might incidentally “take” a species listed as threatened or endangered. Without an Incidental Take Permit “take” is illegal for certain types of species on certain land ownerships. The permit would allow Benton county to perform regular activities such as road and park maintenance and development while promoting listed species conservation, and allow the County to avoid federal liability.

Citizens of Benton County can also benefit, since landowners can be covered by ITP permit if the federally protected species affected is one covered by HCP, if the activity is covered by HCP, and if the landowner is willing and able to undertake one or more conservation/mitigation measures listed in HCP. This can eliminate need for land owners to obtain their own permit, and save the time and money required for private landowners to obtain their own permit from USFWS.

*Q: Will the HCP need to specify in advance the entities that will be benefited by the ITP?*

A: The HCP does not need to specify in advance the entities that will be benefited by the ITP. In most cases these entities can decide to opt in later through a certificate of inclusion. If it is an extremely large project, they may want to pro-actively approach county, but can likely still come in later.

*Q: What is the Stakeholder Advisory Committee role?*

A. The SAC will provide input to the Benton County Commissioners to assist in their decision making process.

*Q: Will Benton County contact all these private land owners if HCP goes through, to let them know of this option, and are they liable otherwise?*

A: Landowners with listed species are potentially liable for take of these species if they lack the coverage of the take permit. Information about the HCP planning process has been in the newspapers, but at this point the County has not thought through the details of how to best distribute the information. Tom Kaye said he thought this is a good topic for the Stakeholder Committee to address: at what level should this happen (a mass-mailing?).

*Q: In this type of habitat, if a landowner does nothing, and the habitat goes away, would that be a “take”?*

A: According to the USFWS, inaction to protect species habitat does not result in take of the species

*Q: After HCP is in place, will all development permits issued by county have to protect*

*these species?*

A: Permits issued by the County will need to address protection of the species. If a landowner needs a development permit, the landowner will need to minimize and mitigate impacts to the species. One option is that if enough mitigation efforts could be “completed” on public lands to meet USFWS criteria, this would lessen the burden on private lands for mitigation. However, there may be biologically important populations on private lands, which may be best protected by conservation easements. Many options could arise from this process. Fortunately, there is a lot of public land in Benton County, which can take some pressure off private lands.

*Q: There will undoubtedly be wide ranging levels of support and participation among landowners, will HCP allow for this?*

A: Landowners will have multiple options. If a landowner requires take coverage, and does not wish to participate in the HCP, they have the option of approaching the USFWS individually. At the present time, landowners who want to participate are encouraged to come forward.

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The HCP will address oak savanna, upland & wetland prairie habitats. These habitats are dynamic, and in the absence of natural disturbance regimes, they may require maintenance to keep them as open prairies. This may involve girdling trees, mowing, or burning.

The species to be covered by the HCP are Taylor’s Checkerspot Butterfly (Candidate for federal listing), Fender’s Blue Butterfly (Federally Listed, Endangered), Kincaid’s Lupine (Federally Listed, Threatened), Streaked Horned Lark (Candidate for federal listing), Willamette Daisy (Federally Listed, Endangered), Nelson’s Checkermallow (Federally Listed, Threatened), Bradshaw’s Lomatium (Federally Listed, Endangered).

The steps of the 3-4 year process in developing the HCP will include public workshops, Stakeholder And Technical Advisory Committee meetings, website development, public meetings (beginning in January) and school and community group participation. Also involved are site assessments on public and private land, to determine species locations, status, and management needs. Site assessments include site species lists, site descriptions, and census of any rare species populations. The County will share this information with landowners at each step.

The TAC and SAC will help define the HCP biological goals and objectives necessary to meet those goals. The TAC and SAC will also help determine covered activities (road and utility construction/maintenance, development, habitat restoration/management), determine permit area (where species are likely to occur), determine impacts (trampling, mowing, etc.), determine conservation measures (restoration, land/easement acquisition), develop monitoring & adaptive management strategy (compliance & effectiveness of monitoring), and develop implementation & funding strategy.

*Q: Is it intentional agricultural activities were not included in suggested covered activities?*

A: The County doesn't issue any type of permit for someone performing agricultural activities, but it is possible that agricultural activities could be covered. The brief list in the powepoint presentation was not intended to be complete.

*Q: What about fragile or sensitive species that are not listed or are not covered in the HCP, wouldn't it be good to look for these species, since you already doing surveys?*

A: This is happening already to a certain extent, but we want to be successful so we have to limit our scope and target one particular type of habitat. We anticipate that other species will benefit from the conservation measures in the HCP and come under umbrella protection. The species currently being considered for coverage are not set in stone. Some may be added or removed.

*Q: Couldn't conservation groups be working to get people started on conservation measures before HCP finished, since it will be a long process? Is there a deadline for when the draft conservation measures will be prepared?*

A: Conservation measurers will probably be drafted in February. Benton County can get credit from USFWS for all conservation measures occurring currently throughout county at all levels. The HCP will include all conservation work that has occurred to date to protect the species and/or its habitat.

*Q: Will there be periodic reviews of HCP?*

A: Adaptive management process is written into the plan, regular monitoring will be established, and there may need to be amendments (process for this type of amendments).

*Q: Is there a mechanism to include new species later?*

A: Yes, you can always amend the HCP to include additional species; there would be an additional process formally amending the HCP—public meetings & revised permit (may be lengthy process, but can be done).

*Q: County and City of Corvallis developed a natural features inventory, is that being utilized in this process? How will being in the urban growth boundary relate to this process, and what dialogue has been initiated with the City of Corvallis?*

A. Greg Verret, Benton County Senior Planner, is a member of the TAC group, and is connected with this process. Commissioner Linda Modrell said that within urban fringe of Corvallis, our intent is to be as incentive-based as possible- want people working with "us" the county.

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The draft timeline for the HCP is as follows:

-2006: Field assessments (Cardwell Hill area), TAC & SAC meetings

-2007: Public Meetings (January), TAC & SAC meetings, field assessments (April-July), draft HCP (December)

-2008: Public Meetings, TAC & SAC Meetings, Field Assessments (Apr.- July), draft

NEPA Document (Parametrix & IAE)  
-2009: final NEPA document

**Review Stakeholder Advisory Committee Charter (Michelle Michaud)**

The County has developed this Charter to describe the role and purpose of the SAC. The membership of the committee will be posted on the website, along with all meeting minutes and meeting dates. TAC and SAC meetings are open to the public (see Principles & Responsibilities on SAC Charter). The SAC may wish to form sub-committees as the need arises. The HCP documents will be drafted by IAE; and will be available on the HCP website.

Benton County received grant from USFWS, and they have to provide match for that grant (in-kind). Michelle indicated that if anyone on the SAC wants to use their time spent on the project as match to complete the spreadsheet attached to the handout materials. The information should be sent to George McAdams at Benton County. Benton County can not use federal dollars to match federal dollars. The county will send email spreadsheets to SAC members to keep track of their time.

*Q: How will the County connect with private landowners who are interested in having their properties surveyed? Is there a way to get the word out about potential survey work, such as the Greenbelt Land Trust's newsletter?*

A: Benton County property is the focus for the next field season. However, if there is sufficient time, we will also conduct surveys on private property of willing landowners. Also in 2008 we will complete the survey work focusing primarily on private lands. Finding those private landowners who want their property surveyed is key. However, we also have limited time and budget to conduct survey work so we want to be sure that the property surveyed has a high likelihood of having the species present. In this Spring's survey work in the Cardwell Hill area, the positive response of landowners created a large demand for surveys. We may want to conduct pre-visit assessment to prioritize key private holdings for survey.

*Q: Is there a possibility of holding an outreach meeting in Monroe? (Long Tom Watershed Council Meetings)*

A: Yes, we would be happy to come and give a presentation about the HCP.

*Q: How will the input from the SAC be incorporated in to final decisions?*

A: The Board of Commissioners will make final decisions, while the committee can make recommendations. If there are multiple opinions within the SAC or TAC, all of these can be reported to the Board of Commissioners, for use in the decision making process.

**Stakeholder/General Public Comments**

*Comment: Make a more descriptive and easier to remember title for the HCP. This would help with outreach and easier reference. The County should make it clear that the HCP is for prairie habitat, since there could be another plan developed in the same area in future.*

*Q Is there another recovery plan in process? What recovery plan was referred to in the powerpoint presentation?*

The Southwest Washington and Western Oregon Prairie Recovery Plan is a USFWS plan that provides guidance for recovery, e.g., the number of populations and sizes of populations needed for species in this area. The Recovery Plan should provide a target for Benton County to refer to for guidance in the HCP development and should be out for review by the middle of next year. The Recovery plan includes the most up to date scientific knowledge on these species.

*Comment: The HCP process needs to include public outreach opportunities and discussion with the community over possible adverse reactions. There is not much mention of the private sector so far in the HCP development process. Perhaps there is a need for the first sub-committee to address outreach?*

A: Absolutely. A sub-committee meeting could take place before the next SAC Meeting, which will be sometime in March (probably first half of March). Anyone interested in serving on a public outreach subcommittee should contact Carolyn Menke at Institute for Applied Ecology.

**Wrap-Up (Jerry Davis)**

Many decisions will be made in the coming stages of this process, including what species will be included and excluded, and determining the criteria for targeting private land surveys within the limits of time and money. Thank you all for your participation today!