

NEWS from BENTON COUNTY

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Crews use styrofoam blocks to repair Decker Road

Benton County Public Works crews used a seemingly unlikely material to solve consistent slide problems on a rural road.

Road construction crews for the county placed Styrofoam blocks in the ground to stabilize a portion of Decker Road. The two-phase project was carried out in the summers of 2012 and 2014.

Phase 1, completed in the summer of 2012, consisted of placing specialized Styrofoam blocks to stabilize a portion that had slid during the winter storm in January 2012. That portion of road has been tested somewhat since then, withstanding wet weather received last winter.

Phase 2, which already had been scheduled for summer 2014, ended up repairing a nearby section of road where the soil shifted due to wet weather. More than 200 blocks were used in Phase 2 of the project.

"We already scheduled work on Decker Road in that area this summer," Road Manager Jim Stouder said last winter. "But Mother Nature intervened and did a little more damage to the road before we had an opportunity to get started."

The portion of the road that already had been repaired with blocks withstood the saturation. The work for Phase 2 occurred near Milepost 3.5 about a mile south of Decker Bridge and near Neumann Road/Beaver Creek. Decker Road was scheduled to re-open on Sept. 19.



More than 200 blocks, measuring 4 feet by 4 feet by 8 feet and weighing 100 pounds each, were used in Phase 2 of the Decker Road project.

Climate Change is topic of environmental forum

Benton County's Environmental Issues Advisory Committee will be facilitating a community conversation about "Climate Change: Adapting Benton County for the Future" at its annual Fall Forum.

The event - scheduled for 7 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 9, at the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, 645 NW Monroe Ave., in Corvallis - also will feature the naming of the annual Environmental Award recipient, selected by the Benton County Board of Commissioners and Environmental Issues Advisory Committee.

The Benton County Board of

Commissioners and EIAC created the Environmental Award to recognize the year's most outstanding environmental contributions in the community. Any individual or organization is eligible to nominate or apply for the award. Winners demonstrate a commitment to environmental stewardship that goes beyond compliance with regulatory requirements. To be considered for the award, individuals or organizations will have:

- Enhanced environmental conditions within Benton County;
- Implemented environmental projects,

practices or plans with tangible results;

- Provided leadership in improving the environment in Benton County; or
- Lent support to the County Sustainability Policy through their efforts.

While the award, now in its second year, will be at the top of the agenda, three other presenters will be discussing climate change to round out the evening. Benton County Environmental Health staff member Brian Cooke will discuss the Benton County Adaptation Plan for Climate Change; Forest Researcher and Author Dick Waring will discuss Climate Change Effects on Local

Forests and Wildfires; and Oregon State University Professor Emeritus Dave Bella will discuss A Walkable Neighborhood: Designing a Car-Free Community for Environmental Health.

The Fall Forum event is sponsored by the Benton County EIAC and all Benton County residents are invited to attend. Those in attendance will be invited to express their interests in environmental issues affecting Benton County.

For more information, those interested can contact Laurie Starha at 541-766-6002 or at laurie.a.starha@co.benton.or.us.

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Celebration set for collaborative water project with OSU

Benton County, Oregon State University, Oregon Water Resources Department and other partners have collaborated to build a Green Stormwater Infrastructure Research Facility at the county's Avery Complex and the public is invited to come take a look.

A public event has been scheduled next month to commemorate the opening of the Oregon State University-Benton County Green Stormwater Infrastructure Research Facility - an Oregon BEST Lab.

The event - scheduled from 4 to 5 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 16, at the project site, which is located outside the Benton County Avery Facility, 360 SW Avery Ave., in Corvallis - will include a tour and

demonstration of the completed project.

Those in attendance will be able to learn about the partnership project to enhance water quality, provide long-term research and support stormwater and water quality education and outreach. Partners in the project include Benton County, Oregon State University, Oregon BEST, State of Oregon Water Resources Department and the Pacific Northwest Transportation Consortium.

Light refreshments will be provided afterwards in Avery Park. For more information or to RSVP, those interested can contact Benton County Projects Coordinator Adam Stebbins at adam.stebbins@co.benton.or.us or 541-766-6085.



Community Health Centers, OSU launch pharmacy

The Community Health Centers and the Oregon State University College of Pharmacy have partnered to offer pharmacy services at the Health Centers.

At a grand opening event on Aug. 15 at the Benton County Health Department, officials from Benton County as well as the College of Pharmacy congregated to celebrate the opening and ceremonial ribbon-cutting.

The College of Pharmacy and Health Centers have teamed up to operate the full-service pharmacy, which will be available only to Health Center clients and will be operated by College of Pharmacy faculty, staff and students.

In addition to dispensing medications, the pharmacy staff will provide medication education, help with medication adherence and many more services. The clinical pharmacists also will continue working closely with the primary care teams of the Health Centers.

As a Federally Qualified Health Center, the Community Health Centers have the ability to buy medications at a lower cost and pass savings along to clients. By opening a pharmacy on-site, it can ensure clients have access to the most affordable medications available in a location that is easy for them to access.

Those receiving primary care, family planning and mental health services from the Benton County Health Department or



Community Health Centers are eligible to use the pharmacy. While there will be one pharmacy location initially, prescriptions for everyone in the Community Health Centers system can be filled at the pharmacy.

Benton County city celebrates centennial anniversary

The city of Monroe celebrated its 100th birthday in late August.

Monroe has a long and proud history, originally sprouting up around a small sawmill established by Joseph White in 1852 to form the settlement of White's Mill. Over the years, the area became more populous with another community - Starr Point - forming to the north. In 1857, the two merged to form Monroe, which was incorporated 100 years ago in August.

The city quickly became a center for paddle boat traffic and, at one point, had five gas stations, four grocery stores, three automobile dealers, a pool hall, hotel and several restaurants. Located on the Long Tom River, many new businesses have emerged over the years to supplement the old mainstays of agriculture and timber. Today, the area is ripe with vineyards, wineries, Christmas tree farms and even a distillery.

Monroe High School, built in the 1920s and expanded in the 1950s, as well as the local grade school both are focal points of community pride. When it comes to pride, it's hard to top Monroe. As a community, Monroe has managed year after year to assemble the finest Christmas Light Parade in Benton County.

Monroe is home to a county-operated Community Health Center providing local access to medical care. Community members also have come together in a successful effort to build a new library that



is a crown jewel at the northern entrance to town. All of these things speak highly of Monroe residents' commitment to community. We are proud that the City of Monroe is a part of Benton County and that community spirit persists here today.

The Benton County Board of Commissioners issued a proclamation congratulating the city of Monroe on its 100th birthday as an incorporated city.

As summer concludes, wildfire threat still exists

Even though school is back in session and fall is approaching quickly, the threat of fire in the wildland/urban interface still is very real, as demonstrated by the blaze in the Timberhill area of Corvallis in September.

That fire - which started in Chip Ross Park - burned 86 acres and damaged one home on the edge of town. Dry, warm summer days continue making the threat of wildfire extremely high for many communities. In fact, this year's fire season has exceeded the 10-year average of acres burned in Oregon.

According to a survey from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, despite an increase in weather-related disasters, only 39 percent of respondents have developed and discussed an emergency plan with their household. Steps can be taken to protect homes, properties and families.

For those who live near a wooded area, it is important to learn about and establish defensible space around homes. Defensible space is created through the following steps:



- Create a 30-foot "safety zone" - which is as free of vegetation as possible - around the home;
- Create an additional 100-foot buffer zone with reduced vegetation;
- All vegetation in this season should be kept, "lean, green and clean";

- Remove any flammable materials such as firewood within 30 feet of all buildings;
- Use fire resistant siding, roofing and building materials whenever possible; and
- Create outdoor water storage using a pond, pool or well.

Even houses in town can be susceptible to embers that ignite dry vegetation, debris in rain gutters and flammable roofs. Now is a good time to check for and reduce those fire fuels that may have accumulated.

It is also important to have a family conversation and make a disaster plan. This should include everyone understanding fire escape routes from the home and identifying a meeting place both nearby and outside the neighborhood. Families should discuss how to contact each other during an emergency and ask an out-of-state friend to be a family contact, as it often is easier to call long-distance immediately after a disaster than locally. Everyone and all pets

in the household should be included in this planning. The plan should be written down so there is less chance of miscommunication and emergency phone numbers should be kept in cars and backpacks in case cell phones aren't working.

Another tool available to help local residents during disaster situations is the Linn-Benton Alert Emergency Notification System. This allows first responders to send messages in an event to impacted neighborhoods. To sign up in Benton County, go online to <http://tinyurl.com/9cn3aum>. Messages can be sent to cell phones via voice and text as well as to email addresses. Each person who signs up designates how they would like to receive the information.

For more information, those interested can go online to the following websites: <http://www.co.benton.or.us/sheriff/ems/index.php> or <http://www.keeporengreen.org>

Sheriff's Office offers jail tours

The Benton County Sheriff's Office is offering opportunities for the public to see first-hand the situation at the Benton County jail.

The current jail was built in 1976 with an original capacity of 27 offenders. The facility originally was intended to operate as a short-term option until a regional facility associated with the Oregon Department of Corrections was built. Instead it has been the county's primary jail ever since. When police officers, state troopers and Sheriff's deputies

from around the county arrest individuals anywhere in Benton County, they are brought to the facility.

Over the years the facility has been modernized to improve safety and security for inmates and staff. Now, it has a capacity of 40 beds but - because inmates must be segregated based on severity of the crime, behavior and gender - the jail often is at capacity while housing an average of just 28 to 34 inmates.

Currently the county transports inmates

to other facilities in nearby counties. Renting beds at those counties costs around \$1 million each year, not counting transportation costs and personnel time for moving the inmates. Even with the extra rental jail beds, at times inmates still are released due to overcrowding.

For those who would like to see the jail for themselves, tours are coming up at 10 a.m. on Sept. 27, Oct. 18 and Nov. 15. Those interested must register in advance by going online to <http://www.co.benton.or.us/sheriff/corrections/jailform.php>.



New Elections Supervisor reports for duty



A new Benton County Elections Supervisor took his post in August.

Benton County Clerk James Morales is announcing the hiring of Jeffery Doty as the next Elections Supervisor for the county.

"I am so pleased to have the opportunity to add Jeff's experience and knowledge to lead our Elections and Passports team," Morales said.

Doty - who most recently has served as Chief Deputy County Clerk/Director of Elections in Douglas County - is a 25-year veteran elections professional and will be assuming the leadership position over the

County Clerk's Elections and Passports division. He has served in the Douglas County Clerk's Office for about 3 years and before that did similar work in Clackamas County as Elections Manager and Washington County as Elections Supervisor.

Doty is a Certified Elections Administrator with the Oregon Association of County Clerks and is a Certified Elections/Registration Administrator through The Election Center. He also holds certification with the United States State Department as a United States Passport Acceptance Agent.

"I am thrilled to have the opportunity to work for Benton County and the Clerk's Office," Doty said. "Benton County and its Clerk's Office both are very well respected throughout the state, so I understand how fortunate I am to have this chance to become part of the organization. Having grown up in the area, returning to Benton County will be a homecoming for me and an opportunity to be closer to family and friends. I couldn't be happier."

Benton County names new Public Works Director



Benton County has tapped an Engineer from the Chicago area to lead its Public Works Department.

Joshua Wheeler, most recently the City Engineer/Public Works Director for the city of North Chicago, in Illinois, took the post in Benton

County in early August.

Wheeler has more than 9 years of experience in engineering, project management and as a public works director. His background includes public and private sector experience. He also holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Purdue University.

"Josh was selected from an excellent field of candidates after a very thorough and inclusive process," Benton County Chief Operating Officer Dennis Aloia said. "We are pleased to have him on board."

After a national search yielding an excellent field of candidates, Wheeler was selected out of five finalists. The process included multiple panel screenings, a full day of events and interviews and a public forum for community input. Wheeler fills the position vacated by Roger Irvin, who retired in the spring.

"I am looking forward to moving west and continuing my career in Benton County," Wheeler said before arriving on the job. "The interview process was rigorous but gave the candidates an excellent view of what Benton County is all about. The staff could not have been more gracious and supportive, and I look forward to working with them to continue the success they have."

As weather cools, watch out for bats

With warmer weather persisting and Fall setting in, multiple factors are contributing to an increased chance of encounters between bats and humans or pets.

Public Health officials from the Benton County Health Department responded to a case over the summer where a bat was picked up by a dog. Fortunately, the dog in question over the summer was up-to-date on its vaccinations and no humans came into contact with the bat. Bats are a primary carrier of rabies in Oregon and pets should be kept fully vaccinated. Contact with bats – or any wild animal acting abnormally – should be avoided.

Warm weather means bats become more active and contacts with humans and pets become more likely. Cooler weather, though, will not reverse that trend, as bats will be looking for warm places to seek shelter.

During the summer months, the Benton County Health Department receives an increased number of calls about bats

entering homes. Bats are naturally active during the evening hours between April and mid-October. During warm weather people tend to sleep with windows open and may inadvertently allow bats to enter their homes. As weather patterns cool when the fall and winter set in, bats will be seeking warmer shelter in barns, houses, garages and other indoor locations.

“This puts people at risk for contact with bats,” Environmental Health Division Manager Bill Emminger said. “All open windows should have screens.”

Children especially may want to handle bats that they encounter either inside or outside their homes. Parents need to caution their children not to touch or handle any bats. Rabies is endemic in Oregon bats, so bats should never be handled bare-handed, whether dead or alive. If you find a bat inside your home and you cannot rule out the possibility that anyone in the house has had direct physical contact with it, or if it is

found in a room where children or disabled persons sleep, the bat should be captured and tested for rabies.

The Benton County Health Department can be consulted on how to safely capture bats or what to do if the bat cannot be captured and tested. If you are certain that no one has had direct contact with the bat, it is best to open a door to the outside and let it escape. Injured or sick bats that are found outdoors should be isolated carefully to prevent contact with other animals or persons, making sure not to place people or pets at risk. Dead bats should be handled with gloves or a shovel, double-bagged and placed in the trash.

All pet owners should make certain that their dogs and cats are vaccinated against rabies. Protecting pets from rabies can provide a buffer zone of immune animals between humans and rabid wild animals such as bats. Testing for rabies is inexpensive and good insurance whenever there is even

a remote chance of contact with people or pets. Bat bites are not always readily apparent.

If you think your pet or domestic animal has been bitten by or had other close contact with a bat, contact your veterinarian or Environmental Health at 541-766-6841 for guidance. The bat should be captured, if at all possible, and tested for rabies even if the animal has been vaccinated against rabies.

“It is important to vaccinate your cats against rabies, not just dogs,” Senior Environmental Health Specialist Gordon Brown said. “Cats prey on bats and are at a higher risk for contracting rabies than dogs.”

For more information about bats, animal bites or rabies, those interested can contact Benton County Environmental Health at 541-766-6841. Useful information also is available at <http://www.dhs.state.or.us/publichealth/acd/rabies/bats.cfm> or http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/submenu/sub_rabies.htm.

Community stitches together historic memento



Many Benton County residents have taken a memorable place in Benton County history by contributing to a quilt commemorating the Benton County Fair and Rodeo's 100th year.

The quilt was unveiled to the public in a special ceremony on the first day of the Fair – Wednesday, July 30 – at the Benton County Fairgrounds Auditorium. Approximately 50 people attended.

More than 64 people each sewed together a patch, using materials in packets provided to them at the 100th annual Fair last year, which were assembled into one quilt marking the milestone. Of those contributors, 64 chose to have their names included on the quilt. Block patterns were

available for beginning or intermediate quilters. Each packet contained fabric, instructions and tags for participants to mark their names.

The idea came from Benton County Fair Board Member Betty Malone. She wanted to do something special to commemorate this landmark year for the Fair. Dawn Wunder – a former Benton County employee and wife of Fairgrounds Manager Lonny Wunder – cut and made the packets and Donna Johnson assembled the blocks into the final quilt for display at this year's event, the 101st offering of the Benton County Fair and Rodeo.

“This quilt would not have happened if Dawn hadn't just grabbed the idea and run with it,” Malone said. “And Donna Johnson

did an absolutely fantastic job of piecing together the squares from so many people. I'm so excited to have this beautiful quilt represent the Fair Centennial.”

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County crews maintain 460 miles of roads

Benton County road crews were busy this summer with chip-sealing and bridge projects around the county. In all, the county maintains 460 miles of roads, mostly in rural areas.

Chip seal is a treatment of the surface of a paved road. It is designed to seal and protect the pavement, extending the life of the road. Chip seal paving improves road quality, protects road surfaces from water damage and improves vehicle traction.

This summer Benton County road crews completed chip seal projects on 11 Benton

County roads, including the following:

- Llewellyn Road from Fern to Peterson and from Bellfountain to Fern;
- West Hills Road from Reservoir to the Left Curve and from Left Curve to 19th;
- 19th Street from the railroad to Industrial Way;
- Bellfountain Road from Llewellyn to Greenberry and from Greenberry to Hull Place;
- South 53rd St. from Plymouth to the bridge;
- Chapel Drive from 19th to Bellfountain;

- Plymouth Road from South 53rd St. to Bellfountain;
- Grange Hall Road from state Highway 34 to Fern;
- Gellatly Way from state Highway 34 to the end of the pavement;
- Fern Road from Wonderly Lane to Airport Road; and
- Country Club Road from 53rd St. to Highway 20/34.

In all, about 17 miles of roadway was chip-sealed and another 18 miles underwent other kinds of maintenance work.