

# NEWS from BENTON COUNTY

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Benton County, Oregon

Volume 3, Issue 1

## Flooding: Preparedness saves lives

This already has been a wet year, and even though we had some warm weather this fall, rain and cold are the order of the day. This is due, among other things, to a regular climate cycle known as La Nina – which usually brings colder, wetter weather to the Pacific Northwest.

Floods are also part of life in Willamette Valley winters, and several of the largest in recent memory have occurred during La Nina cycles like this one. Flooding occurs when climate or weather patterns, geology and hydrology combine to create conditions where river and stream waters flow outside main channels and overspill banks. Development in the county also causes displacement of acreage that historically has functioned as flood storage. In the Willamette Valley, flooding most commonly occurs between November and March each winter when storms from the Pacific Ocean bring intense and sustained rainfall to the area.

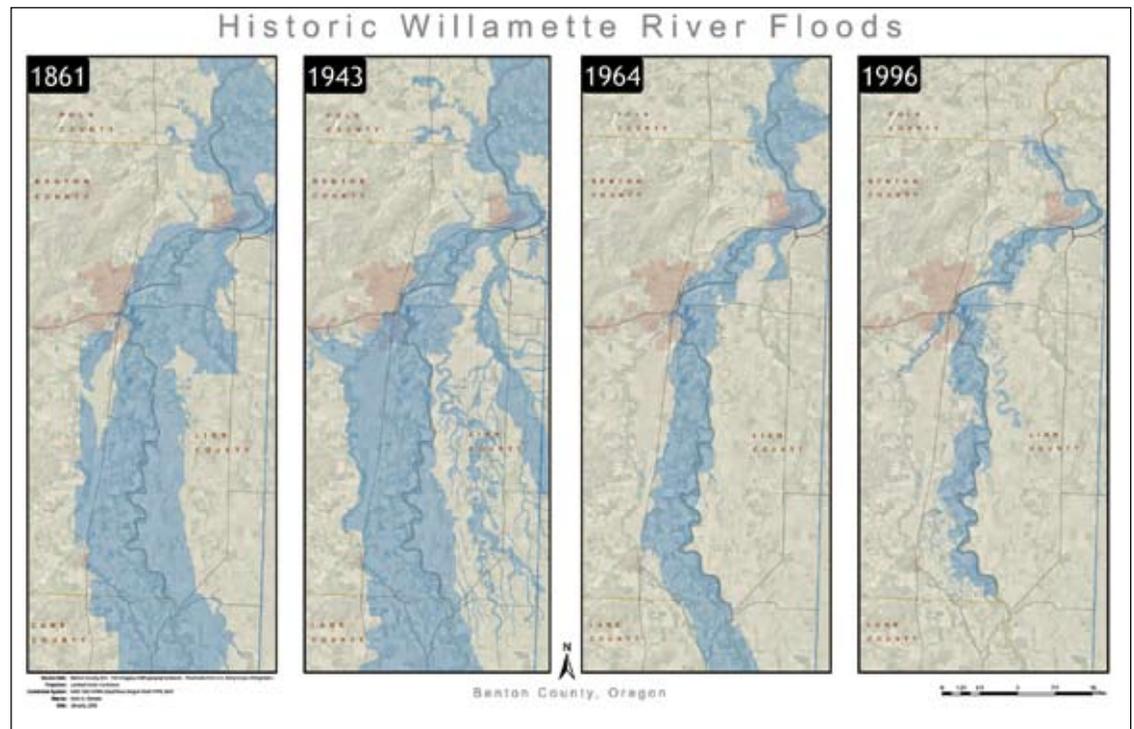
### Be Prepared

Flood preparedness includes finding

out if your property is in a flood area. If you got a flyer in the mail during the fall, some part of your property is in a flood area. If you haven't received anything, contact your city or county community planning office to get maps and information. If you are in a flood area, flood insurance is available from the National Flood Insurance Program. More information is available at <http://www.floodsmart.gov> or by asking local officials.

The best way to prepare for floods and other emergencies is to have a family emergency plan and home and car kits ready to go before you need them. Planning and building kits can be created quickly and cost-effectively. A basic

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## Budget season is here

Every two years Benton County embarks on its budgeting process to set priorities and plan ahead to manage a vast array of services. The forecast this cycle predicts a still lagging economy, the certainty of funding cuts from the state and the realities of other revenue streams drying up.

So far there is not a clear picture of how much revenue will be coming to support Benton County services, but the county is planning on more belt-tightening to make ends meet in the coming years. Responsible fiscal management put Benton County in stable position relative to some other Oregon counties but, according to

projections, it would be impossible to maintain the current level of service without dipping into reserve funds in the coming biennium. Being proactive now will put the county in better position to handle future economic conditions.

Increased personnel costs – the largest expense to any service-based organization – always play a large role in the budget. These expenses will be carefully and strategically scrutinized in coming budgets. Non-represented employees already accepted salary freezes last year and managers are reviewing carefully whether to fill vacant positions. All of these moves

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## Benton County Sheriff's Office members receive statewide OSSA recognition

On Wednesday, Dec. 8, the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association (OSSA) recognized two members of the Benton County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) as being the best in their field. Awards were presented to BCSO Lieutenant Greg Ridler and Search and Rescue (SAR) volunteer Todd Shechter.

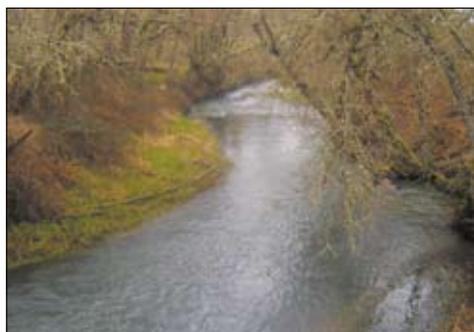
Lt. Ridler received the statewide recognition as the 2010 Law Enforcement Commander of the Year. Ridler took command of Benton County patrol operations in January 2005 at a time when the office was facing uncertainty. Ridler's tireless

support for his staff, the Office, and the community earned him the respect of his peers, supervisors and subordinates alike. Recognition from OSSA clearly articulates how inspiring his accomplishments are.

Shechter, the SAR volunteer, also was recognized by OSSA as the Statewide 2010 SAR Volunteer of the Year. Shechter is the current president of the Corvallis Mountain Rescue Unit, as well as a member of Marys Peak Search and Rescue. Shechter was described as a "standout amongst standouts" for his work throughout the state on training

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## Flooding *Continued from page 1*



72-hour kit for yourself and your family includes sensible shoes, warm clothes, drinking water, food, medications, pet supplies and other items in a durable and portable container. The Benton County Sheriff's Office has information on planning and emergency kits, as well as an easy sign up for Linn-Benton Alert which is available on the Web at <http://www.co.benton.or.us/sheriff/ems>.

Don't rely on being able to make cell phone calls on the fly – phones may be busy or out of service during a disaster. Text messages are more likely to get through than calls, but planning is best of all. Make sure you have contact information for home, work and school; disasters can strike during the day while everyone is apart. Next, establish two meeting places – one local and one out-of-area – to account for different incidents. Lastly, designate a friend or relative as an out-of-area contact with whom everyone can report.

At home, know how to turn off utilities if they are damaged. Keep tools near gas valves, check electrical panels and know where your water shutoff is. Visit your neighbors and discuss mutual preparedness, especially if you have children or seniors at home. Programs such as Map Your Neighborhood (training available free of charge from the Benton County Sheriff's Office) provide the next step beyond personal preparedness. Experience shows that communities that prepare together are much more disaster resilient.

### If the Creek Rises

Many unexpected events occur when seemingly disconnected factors reinforce each other. One of the prime duties of emergency management is to maintain views of these disconnected factors and mitigate them before they collide in an incident. As a result, Benton County is working with many other agencies to obtain information and deliver it to citizens as quickly and accurately as possible.

If high water covers the road, turn around – don't drown! Even a few inches of flowing water can sweep a person off their feet or carry a car away. The safest way to survive flood waters is not to enter them in the first place. If evacuations are ordered, follow instructions from public safety workers and stick to established routes. Benton County Public Works, city public works agencies and Oregon Department of Transportation all will provide information about road closures and evacuation routes. Move cautiously but steadily and don't rush. Help others if you are able, after taking care of yourself.

Ways to stay alert about emergencies include NOAA weather radios, telephone lines for local road departments and the Emergency Alert System on television and radio stations. Pick your destination before you go – plan for evacuation routes and shelter sites. If you see any electrical hazards, steer well clear – downed power lines or other electrical sources can be harmful from far away in water. If you do evacuate from your home, turning off electricity and water before you leave can improve safety for responders, reduce damages and speed recovery.

### When the Waters Recede

Returning to a flooded area can be dangerous, too, so be alert to your environment, use caution and stay out if the situation seems unsafe.

Wet or muddy surfaces can be slip hazards, especially stairways and ramps. Debris may cover interior floors and broken glass may be common. Gas leaks and electrical hazards can persist for days, so if it is safe to approach, make sure that service is shut off. Do not turn on gas or electrical service; wait for the utility crews to do so. Flood waters pick up contaminants from roads, farms, factories and storage buildings, so carefully decontaminate anything that got wet. Spoiled food and cosmetics also can present a health hazard; when in doubt, throw them out. Lastly, watch out for animals that may have sought shelter in your home; if you find any, give them a way out so everyone can get back to their homes.

With some knowledge about how to handle emergencies, Benton County can have a safe (though rainy!) winter season. Stay up to date on weather, flood maps and other information at the Benton County Sheriff's Office website at <http://www.co.benton.or.us/sheriff/ems>.



*Todd Shechter, Search & Rescue volunteer*



*Lieutenant Greg Ridler, Benton County Sheriff's Office*

## Awards *Continued from page 1*

and mission response. Shechter has participated in hundreds of local and mutual aid missions (including high profile missions such as the Brooke Wilberger and Kyron Horman cases) as a team leader, operations section chief and as a field deployable resource certified at the Rescue level through the Mountain Rescue Association.

“While we believe we have outstanding employees and volunteers working for the Benton County Sheriff's Office, to receive statewide recognition from their peers for their excellence just confirms that belief,” Sheriff Diana Simpson said.

Both individuals were commended at an award ceremony in December in Bend.

## Budget *Continued from page 1*

impact service levels.

“At some point services suffer,” Benton County Budget Manager Pat Cochran said. “Staff provides services and the largest driver of cost is maintaining staff.”

Much of Benton County's revenue comes from property tax funding. For every dollar of property taxes paid, Benton County receives approximately 17 cents. That funding has been reduced over the years through the passage of Measures 47 and 50 in the 1990s. Those measures changed the taxable value calculations and further capped percentage growth of those property values at 3 percent, in many years creating lower than real market taxable values.

Also in the 1990s, Measure 5 capped the amount of property taxes assessed for local government – including city and county government – operations at \$10 per thousand of real market value. It also placed greater funding burdens on the state for some local services, especially school districts. Unfunded crime measures such as Measure 11 also put pressure on the state to allocate more resources to prison operations instead of social services.

State funding covers local parole and probation and county mental health services, as well as the Commission on Children and Families. The county

currently provides these services for the state.

Federal forest payments will drop off significantly for Benton County and then end completely in the fall of 2011. Despite efforts by Oregon county commissioners – including Commissioners Annabelle Jaramillo and Jay Dixon from Benton County – who met with United States Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack last year in Portland to request continued forest payments to the counties, it is unclear whether Congress will extend them.

Benton County voters generously approved the Health and Public Safety Levy in 2007 and, at that time, the Board of Commissioners promised that the levy would be reduced if federal forest payments were reauthorized. Those payments were reauthorized by the federal government, and Benton County kept its promise. The levy expires in July 2013. To continue the stream of funding to maintain public health and safety service levels, the levy would need to be reauthorized by voters.

Even though Benton County faces many of the same challenges as everyone, it remains on relatively solid financial footing and will continue seeking innovative ways to improve efficiency, reduce costs and offer the high level of service that county residents deserve.

## Protecting public health ... bite by bite Irish Bend closed to vehicle access

By **Kenny Arellano**  
OSU PROMISE Intern

There is nothing like a meal at a favorite restaurant to lift the spirits. But going out to eat means handing over the chef hat and putting your health in someone else's hands.

Still, sometimes we just can't resist indulging ourselves at our favorite food place. Just like eating out, many potential health risks can't be avoided and are inevitable just as soon as we step out the door. Many times health risks are simply a product of the environment in which we live.

That is why it's important to know that someone is working to help minimize these risks, which are a part of our daily lives. Benton County's Environmental Health Division works hard to mitigate many of these types of risks which are a part of our environment.

"We regulate things in people's environment and those things that could get them sick," Benton County Environmental Health Specialist Scott Krueger said.

The Environmental Health team provides many services which help keep us from getting sick when we are out and about. They are responsible for licensing and inspecting daycares, food facilities, tourist accommodations and pools and spas. They also oversee issues



concerning solid waste management, animal bite investigations and private and public water systems.

This past summer Environmental Health Specialists made a stop at Da Vinci Days to inspect food vendors to make sure the proper food handling procedures were being followed to protect the health of customers.

"It's a good idea. It makes people stay on their feet," said Bev McNeil, who was at Da Vinci Days helping sell elephant ears to raise money for the Altrusa Club of Corvallis.

This doesn't mean we should be afraid of getting sick whenever we step out the door, but it's always better to do what we can to prevent illnesses from happening.

"We work with potential risks," Krueger said. "If we can mitigate the risk, why wouldn't we?"

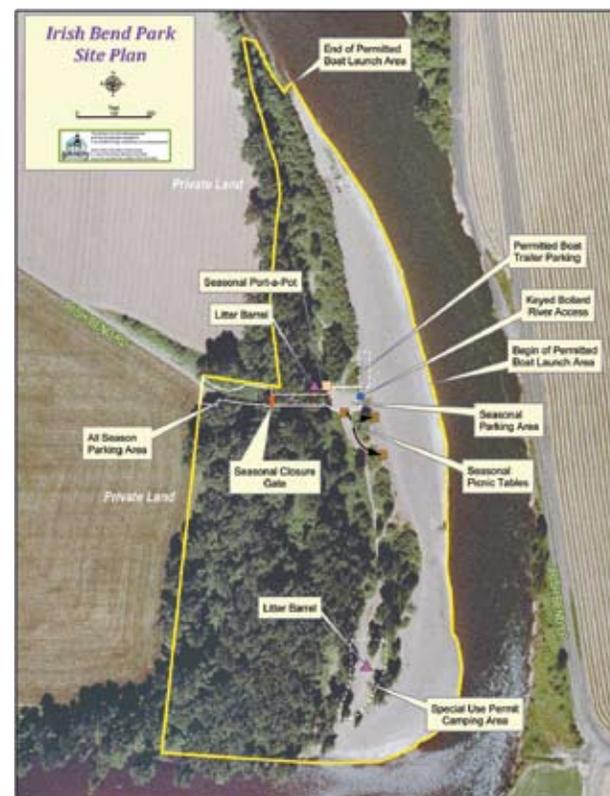
Vehicle access to Irish Bend County Park near Monroe is closed for the season due to winter river flow patterns.

Much of the existing parking area near the river is inundated with river water as rains pick up and snow melts off during the winter and early spring months.

A locked gate at Irish Bend prevents vehicle access to the park – except by parks maintenance staff and law enforcement – and will be unlocked in the spring, when river water has receded enough to allow access and parking. Site visitors will be able to access the park on foot, though there is limited parking outside the locked gate.

Individuals can request 2011 permit and key access through the locked, cabled entryway to the beach/boat launch area, for use once the gate is re-opened.

Access keys for 2010 must be returned to the Benton County Natural Areas and Parks Department. The \$50 deposit refund may be requested; it takes approximately two weeks to process a deposit refund. If not refunded, the \$50 deposit may be applied to the 2011 season, and a new 2011 cable access



key will be issued for use when the gate is re-opened.

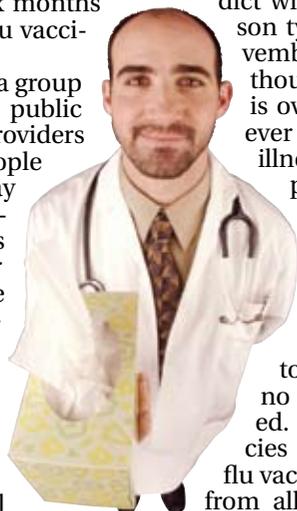
For more information about Irish Bend Park access permits and keys, those interested can contact the Benton County Natural Areas and Parks Department at 541-766-6871.

## Flu vaccine: Give it a shot!

The Centers for Disease control is recommending that everyone six months and older receive an annual flu vaccination this year.

The Flu Vaccine Coalition – a group of Benton and Linn County public health officials, health care providers and pharmacies – reminds people that vaccination is the best way to prevent the spread of illness. Seasonal flu vaccine is especially recommended for all health care workers, people with chronic medical conditions, pregnant women and people living with or caring for babies or elderly people.

H1N1 is just one of the flu virus variations circulating in the 2010-11 flu season, and this year's flu vaccine will protect against that strain of the



virus, as well as others that experts predict will be in circulation. Flu season typically peaks from late November through February. Even though last year's flu pandemic is over, it still is as important as ever to be mindful of spreading illness, as flu. Although many people recover from the flu within several days, some are more susceptible to complications from the flu due to age, health condition or other factors.

Vaccine supply is expected to be sufficient this year and no priority system is anticipated. Medical providers, pharmacies and employers are offering flu vaccination. Vaccine is available from all health care providers, the Benton County Health Department

and many pharmacies. Flu vaccine information is available online at <http://www.flu.oregon.gov>.

Other effective ways to help slow the spread of illness include: cover coughs and sneezes; wash hands frequently, using soap and warm water, especially after coughing or sneezing; try to avoid close contact with sick people; always stay home from work or school when sick and limit contact with others to keep them from getting sick; and avoid touching the eyes, nose or mouth.

The Flu Vaccine Coalition is teaming up again this year to distribute flu vaccine. The coalition includes the Benton County Health Department, Corvallis Family Medicine, Fred Meyer Pharmacies, the



Linn County Health Department, Oregon State University Student Health, Samaritan Health Services hospitals and medical clinics, The Corvallis Clinic and other healthcare providers. For more information about flu vaccine, those interested can contact their healthcare provider or the Benton County Health Department at 541-766-6835.

## Alpine: A community with a plan



More than 50 residents of the Alpine area participated in the kickoff meeting for the Alpine Community Plan on Oct. 20.

The meeting's purpose was to enable residents to identify their concerns and help guide the future of land use in Alpine. County planners heard valuable input from the engaged and enthusiastic crowd, as folks described what they like about living in Alpine and what they would like to change.

Earning high praise was the quiet, rural atmosphere of this small community. Residents expressed a strong desire to work together to establish a viable community center facility. The need for change was recognized also, as attendees underscored their desire to improve Alpine's visual appearance to foster greater community pride. The revitalization of a small commercial

core is another change important to residents, as is integrating open space with pedestrian and bicycle connections into their community planning.

Spurred by requirements of Oregon's statewide planning program, the Alpine Community Plan will examine current land use patterns and issues and help the community move toward its stated goals.

Alpine is located at the convergence of popular bicycle routes, the Benton County Scenic Loop, the Alpine Country Trail, the Alsea Loop of the Willamette Valley Birding Trail and near popular outdoor destinations such as Alsea Falls and Finley Wildlife Refuge.

With such a rich natural environment and residents willing to participate in



improving their community, Alpine is poised to reap the rewards of a successful planning process: A community that preserves its most important values while moving with intention toward a chosen future.

## Talking shop ... for farmers



The 11<sup>th</sup>-annual Oregon State University Extension Small Farms Conference is scheduled for Feb. 26 on the OSU campus in Corvallis.

This year's one-day event features Center for Rural Affairs Executive Director Chuck Hassebrook as keynote speaker. Hassebrook is an expert on the farm bill and rural issues. Congressman

Kurt Schrader, of Oregon's Fifth Congressional District, is an invited speaker.

There will be 21 different sessions at the conference, featuring classes covering food and farming policy, marketing, production, farmers markets, management and other topics. A meat track will include sessions on production, processing and marketing for niche markets.

A carcass breakdown workshop, featuring beef and pork, is planned at the OSU Clark Meat Lab on Sunday, Feb. 27. Participation in that workshop is limited and requires separate enrollment.

For more information on these learning opportunities, those interested can go online to <http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/2011SFC>.

## Foundation secures funding for livestock building at fairgrounds



The Benton County Fairgrounds will be seeing a big change this winter, thanks to the hard work of the Benton County Fair Foundation and the generosity of the Ford Family Foundation.

The Fair Foundation secured a grant totaling \$60,000 from the Roseburg-based Ford Family Foundation to go toward the construction of a new livestock building at the fairgrounds. The Ford Family Foundation was established in 1957 by Kenneth W. and Hallie E. Ford. Its mission is "successful citizens and vital rural communities" in Oregon and Siskiyou County, Calif.

"The Fair Foundation is very excited to have received this very generous donation from the Ford Family Foundation," Benton County Fair Foundation Chair Robyn Rice said. "Our Fair Manager and Fair Board members have worked very hard on this new livestock building project."

Work on the 60-foot-by-200-foot pole barn structure began in late November and is scheduled to conclude in February. The building will be positioned south of the outdoor arena on the fairgrounds property.

"The Ford Foundation grant is a big boost to our private fundraising efforts for our new livestock building," Benton County Fair Board President Kay Dee Cole said. "Without the support of local

donors we'd have a tougher time doing the improvements we need to make the fairgrounds a valuable resource for our community. We are honored to accept this grant and look forward to moving ahead with the project."

The \$120,000 building project is covered by the \$60,000 grant, along with \$40,000 to be contributed by the Fair Foundation and \$20,000 from other local contributions. Once it is completed, the building will be the location of the new solar array, which is being funded by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) money, awarded through the State Energy Program (SEP).

This project will yield energy savings and the array will be used as a public education facility promoting alternative energy production. The project is expected to produce 25 percent of the energy used on the site. The bid to complete the project was awarded to SunWize Inc. and will be handled from its local office in Philomath.

With financing through federal funds, private donations and other forms of grants – as well as cost savings for years to come – these projects are shining examples of how Benton County is being creative in its approaches to funding activities and creating savings that make operating county facilities more sustainable financially and environmentally.

"We are looking forward to watching the building and the solar panel project take shape," Rice said. "It will be a real asset to the fairgrounds facility and also an educational source for Benton County youth and adults. This is a very exciting project for our fairgrounds and Benton County residents, something in which we can take pride in being a part."

### News from Benton County

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Board of Commissioners	766-6800	Human Resources	766-6081
Public Information Officer	766-6082	Community Health Centers	766-6835
Assessment Department	766-6855	Juvenile Department	766-6810
Commission on Children and Families	766-6751	Natural Areas and Parks	766-6871
Development Department	766-6819	OSU Extension Service	766-6750
District Attorney	766-6815	Public Works	766-6821
Elections	766-6756/766-6277	County Clerk/Records	766-6831
Fairgrounds	766-6521	Sheriff's Office	766-6858
Health Department	766-6835	Tax Collection	766-6808