

# NEWS from BENTON COUNTY

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Benton County, Oregon

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## Aiding prosperity central to Benton County mission Benton and Linn counties offer safety alert service

Benton County strives to make its communities great places to live, work and do business.

Business survival often depends on appropriate infrastructure, and Benton County has a hand in those issues locally. The county paves and maintains hundreds of miles of county roads used for commerce, recreation, personal and safety purposes and is also involved in the operation of utility services such as water and sewer and fire hydrants in some of the rural reaches of Benton County. The county also maintains and replaces fish passage culverts that assist the fisheries industry.

By supporting the OSU Extension Service, county residents and businesses – such as farmers and other natural resource-based industries – are able to take advantage of best practices and state-of-the-art educational opportunities to help them thrive in their endeavors. In addition, the Benton County Fairgrounds provide an excellent location for community events, conferences and other activities such as rodeos that bring visitors to town



*A youth work crew restores habitat.*

and money into the local economy. In partnership with OSU, the Fairgrounds provide a safe and healthy opportunity for youth to prosper through 4-H leadership, business skills and building self esteem preparing them to contribute to the community as adults.

To ensure a safe community the Benton County Sheriff's Office provides public safety and law enforcement services; operates a jail to keep offenders off the streets; and provides parole and probation



*Benton County road workers construct a bridge on Stow Pit Road.*

services to monitor residents transitioning back into society. The highly successful drug court program is vital to curbing substance abuse. The Benton County Juvenile Department helps numerous juveniles shown to be at risk, steer themselves into productive lives.

The Benton County Natural Areas and Parks Department is putting young people to work through grants and with federal stimulus dollars to maintain and restore habitat, providing benefit to our natural environments and the natural resources our residents and visitors enjoy.

In the past eight years, Benton County's investment in a Community Project Coordinator has brought in approximately \$4.2 million for infrastructure projects, job development and economic development activities. This investment alone yielded an annual return of approximately \$5 for every \$1 spent. Benton County has also supported economic development services offered by the Community Services Consortium, the Cascades West Council of Governments Small Business Association lending program, the Corvallis Benton Chamber Coalition and the Business Enterprise Center to name a few.

Community Development plans for balanced utilization of properties

using sound land use tools, science and appropriate zoning to maintain healthy and designed growth.

Healthy citizens contribute to robust communities. The Health Department and Community Health Centers of Benton and Linn Counties – both operated by Benton County – provide public health safety and awareness as well as access to high-quality and affordable health care in the community. This and other investments in public health have resulted in Benton County ranking first among all Oregon counties by the independent Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for being a healthy community.

So when Benton County carries out its work to create a healthier and more livable community, job creation is a key expectation. When businesses look at communities for relocation, they often look at factors including livability, health of the community, having an available and well-educated work force and strong public safety. Benton County works hard every day to provide those community features to be more attractive to businesses.

Benton County strives to create the social, environmental and transportation infrastructure for new businesses to rise up within Benton County and prosper.

Benton County, Linn County and the city of Corvallis have joined forces to keep residents informed of emergencies.

Residents can sign up for the Linn-Benton Alert, a notification system that can call or message subscribers to warn them of impending or occurring emergencies and provide critical life-safety instructions when they are needed most. The Linn-Benton Alert will be used only to deliver public safety messages. In many cases residents already will be aware that there is an emergency situation, and the Linn-Benton Alert allows public safety officials to provide crucial information on what people should do in those situations.

"We have partnered with Benton County as one more way to provide and strengthen our response to community safety in both counties," Linn County Sheriff Tim Mueller said.

Public safety officials might use the alert system to provide emergency safety instructions in a hazardous materials accident or natural disaster; to alert residents in a geographic area of an endangered missing child or person with dementia; or to alert a neighborhood to a dangerous person at large in the area.

"The Linn-Benton Alert system is another innovative tool in our all-hazards and multi-layered approach to emergency preparedness," Benton County Sheriff Diana Simpson said.

Linn-Benton Alert is an address-based system that will send alerts only to Zip codes in Linn and Benton counties. Linn and Benton County residents will be able to subscribe to receive these messages, with options to select and prioritize multiple phone, e-mail, text and TTY devices to receive the alerts. Residents can indicate how they want to receive emergency information alerts by registering in the online database. Those who are not residents but are interested in signing up

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# Benton County is No. 1 in public health

The health of Benton County was ranked No. 1 out of 36 Oregon counties by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), based on several key public health indicators.

This honor speaks highly not only of the work of Benton County, but of residents' efforts to remain healthy, as well as the dedication of the health care community. Key indicators of healthy communities were divided into two factors – Health Outcomes and Health Factors – and Benton County earned the top ranking in both.

“Having a healthy community involves many partners working together to address determinants of health that go far beyond treatment of illness,” Health Department Director Mitch Anderson said. “This high ranking is the result of our communities working together to provide a healthy environment, a great educational system, providing and improving access to quality healthcare and promoting wellness and healthy lifestyles. While we have much to celebrate we also have much work to do to address health disparities, assure access to healthcare for everyone and increase opportunities for every individual to succeed in improving their mental and physical wellbeing.”

Benton County – with the help of a professional epidemiologist, paid for with Public Health and Safety Levy dollars, passed by voters – is actively monitoring



Residents participate in a farmer's market event.

health trends in Benton County to address problem areas before they become major issues. Benton County was rated among the top five counties in most individual indicators. County health rankings – conducted in each state by the RWJF – are designed to raise awareness of public health concerns and focus attention on the multiple factors that influence health.

“Benton County is fortunate to have first-class health care providers, yet this report confirms that our overall health is affected by environment,

economics, safety, families, education and more – factors far beyond provision of medical services,” Benton County Health Department Deputy Director Charlie Fautin said. “These outstanding results were not achieved overnight and demonstrate the need for ongoing support of all factors that contribute to health. Benton County Health Department will continue to use this and other health data to guide and direct our programs for greatest benefit and cost-effectiveness.”

## Safety alert

Continued from page 1



for service – for example, a parent of a university student in the area – also are encouraged to register.

Linn-Benton Alert messages will identify which agency is issuing the alert, what the warning is about, how urgent the message is and provide instructions for the listener.

The Linn-Benton Alert system is supported for three years with grant contributions through the state of Oregon and local government funds. Subscriber and land-based information is protected and not sold or shared with other organizations or individuals. For more information or to sign up, those interested can access the Linn County Sheriff's Office Web site at <http://www.linnsheriff.org> or the Benton County Sheriff's Office Web site at <http://www.co.benton.or.us/sheriff/index.php>.

## Stand up and be counted in the U.S. census

The United States Government is conducting its 23<sup>rd</sup> national census this month. The campaign is underway and it is important that the count is as accurate as possible, and that each resident is counted only once, and in the right place.

The 2010 Census questionnaire is simple and easy to fill out, taking only about 10 minutes. Participation in the census is critical for the appropriate allocation of government money and other resources to communities. This census questionnaire is one of the shortest in history, asking households to provide names of residents and their sex, age, date of birth, race, whether they are of Hispanic origin, relationship to head of household, whether the home is owned or rented and telephone number. The form does not ask about citizenship, legal status or for anyone's Social Security number.

All information provided in the census is confidential and by law can't be shared with anyone, including other

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**Census**  
**2010**

government agencies. Title 13 of the U.S. Code prohibits the Census Bureau from sharing confidential information with other government agencies, immigration authorities, law enforcement or any other organization. Census Bureau employees take a lifetime oath swearing to keep information confidential. Penalties for violations include up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Every year, more than \$400 billion of federal money is distributed to states and

communities based in part on census population data. Estimates show that for every person who is not counted, a community can miss out on up to \$1,400 per year in funding for programs, services and other activities that benefit the public. The census numbers also affect local representation in government, as the number of U.S. House of Representatives seats allotted to each state is determined by census data.

When residents fill out the questionnaire and return it by mail, it saves government money. It costs just 44 cents for postage-paid envelopes to return forms, but it costs \$57 to send a census taker door-to-door to follow up with each household that fails to respond. The census questionnaires are available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Russian and Vietnamese.

It's as important as ever, and it's never been easier, to stand up and be counted in this year's United States 2010 Census!

## The News from Benton County

Published quarterly and distributed in The Gazette Times, The Democrat-Herald and other mailer publications, as well as at Benton County office locations and events. Publication is created by Public Information Officer Rick Osborn.

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

## Conservation is a community affair May is Building Safety Month

When it comes to environmental stewardship the Benton County community has a way of coming together to solve problems.

That was the case in January when the roadside at the intersection of West Hills Road and 19<sup>th</sup> Street one mile north of Philomath needed some attention. The Institute for Applied Ecology uses that area, partially created by road realignment, to plant endangered Kincaid's Lupine and collect seeds to locate at other parts of the county. The plant is host to another endangered species: the Fender's blue butterfly.

Fir trees began cropping up on an embankment, infringing on habitat for the lupine and butterfly. The Benton County Natural Areas and Parks Department consulted with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service on ways to remove the trees without impacting the surrounding habitat. Consumers Power Inc. (CPI) already removes trees around power lines, so Superintendent Al Kitzman requested assistance.

CPI sent a service truck with a basket and employees were able to cut the trees without wading through the lupine. While the workers cut, the Benton County Public Works staff used a boom truck to stabilize the trees before they fell and moved them to the edge of the road without touching the ground. Community Services Consortium work crews collected and chipped tree



Workers remove fir trees.

limbs. The work was completed quickly and the lupine and butterfly habitat was left intact.

"It went smoothly and the trees were removed in a short period of time," Kitzman said. "It was really kind of fun because it was a multi-agency project. Public Works maintains the right of way and a lot of folks pitched in to minimize impacts."

### Community Event

Benton County will host a community discussion from 6 to 7:30 p.m. on May 12 in the Moreland Auditorium at the Benton County Historical Society and Museum, 1101 Main St., in Philomath. The main topics will be protecting homes from the threat of wildland fire and the 2010 State of the County address. There also is an opportunity to visit with the Benton County Board of Commissioners and staff members to discuss county issues.

## State statutes guide classification work

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) has been working to evaluate lands within the county to determine which are forestlands and would receive fire protection from ODF.

A Forestland Classification Committee is charged with identifying forestlands in Benton County, as defined by statute. The committee's work began almost two years ago and has led to the inclusion of more property in the wildland urban interface.

When a property is deemed to be forestland, an annual assessment for wildfire protection services provided by the ODF is added to the landowners' annual property tax statement. A per acre

assessment rate is paid with a minimum rate of \$18.75. There also is a \$47.50 surcharge for improved lots. According to ODF Assistant District Forester Don Everingham, the majority of property owners in the wildland-urban interface would pay a combined amount of \$66.25 per year for wildland fire protection services.

ODF's services are different from those offered by rural structure fire protection districts in that they focus on wildland fires and assuring they don't infringe upon homes, as well as making sure that structure fires don't create wildland fires. ODF also has a variety of unique resources available such as

bulldozers, air tankers and other tools to contain and suppress wildland fires.

The ODF and Classification Committee held several public forums to discuss these issues with the community, as well as a formal public hearing. Currently the committee is reviewing public comments to determine a clear path forward in the process. The committee does not set the minimum assessment or surcharge rates. Those are defined in Oregon statutes.

"The committee's role is to determine whether a property should be classified as forestland, and a committee is required to base its decisions strictly on Oregon statutes that define forestlands," Everingham said.

Building Safety Month kicks off on May 1 with an interactive booth at the Corvallis Farmer's Market hosted by the Benton County Building Division and the City of Corvallis. Children will be able to build birdhouses with the building inspectors, and the adults will have an opportunity to view the good wall/bad wall display and ask questions pertaining to building codes and permits.

The goal of Building Safety Month is to raise public awareness of critical issues such as the structural soundness of buildings; reliability of fire prevention and suppression systems, plumbing and mechanical systems; and energy efficiency and sustainability. Building Safety Month 2010 will highlight four areas, one for each week of the month.

**Week 1 Energy and Green Building:** Green building is defined as building with a conscious effort to minimize negative impacts on outdoor and indoor environments. Ways to make homes more sustainable include using eco-friendly adhesives, sealants and paints that emit low levels of volatile organic compounds; cleaning houses with environmentally friendly cleaning products; and using local hazardous waste collection facilities for disposing of batteries, fluorescent bulbs, chemicals and paints. Steps to reduce energy bills include turning off lights and unplugging appliances when not in use; using CFL light bulbs; installing a programmable thermostat; plugging televisions and DVD players into power strips and then turning off the power strips when not in use; and regularly changing HVAC filters.

**Week 2 Disaster Safety and Mitigation:** Every household should have an emergency plan that includes two exit

routes from the house and a designated meeting place for the family. Everyone in the family should know the plan. Creating disaster supply kits and planning ahead for pet care should be part of this preparation. Never drive through floodwaters or flooded roads and in wildfire-prone areas remove dry and dead debris within 30 feet of buildings, including litter from roofs, rain gutters, decks and walkways.

**Week 3 Fire Safety:** Smoke detectors are an inexpensive way to protect homes and families. Smoke detectors should be installed in each bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on each floor. They should be tested monthly and batteries replaced as required by the manufacturer. Circuits and extension cords should never be overloaded and candles should only be used in appropriate candle holders and placed away from flammable objects out of the reach of children and pets. Install an ABC type fire extinguisher and maintain a "defensible space" around your homes and accessory buildings.

**Week 4 Backyard Safety:** Constant adult supervision should be practiced around swimming pools, hot tubs and grills. Installing fences or barriers around pools or hot tubs and designated grilling areas as "No Play Zones" can protect children. Grills should be placed away from siding and deck railings and out from under eaves and overhangs. Decks should be checked often for safety and repairs completed promptly.

Benton County Community Development can help community members protect their families and structural investments year round. You are invited to visit the department's booth on May 1 at the Corvallis Farmer's Market, and to bring your children.



Wildland fire protection is ODF's focus.

## Benton County one of 41 sites selected for national program to fight childhood obesity



Community gardens are a viable option for healthy food.

The Benton County Health Department – in collaboration with the city of Corvallis Parks and Recreation Department and other community partners – has been awarded a \$360,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to improve opportunities for physical activity and access to affordable healthy foods for children and families living in southern Benton County, including part of Corvallis.

Based on a rigorous selection process that drew more than 500 applicants from across the country, Benton County is one

of 41 sites selected for the RWJF Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities initiative. The initiative is a collaboration among the Benton County Health Department, Corvallis Parks and Recreation Department and members of the Benton County Healthy Communities Coalition, including the Corvallis Sustainability Action Team, Health Equity Alliance, Casa Latinos Unidos de Benton County, Corvallis Environmental Center, Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership,

Strengthening Rural Families and others.

Benton County's beautiful natural setting, agricultural richness and outdoor recreational resources present many opportunities for physical activity and access to healthy foods. Unfortunately, not all children and families have equal access to these assets.

According to new estimates by the United States Census Bureau, rates of childhood poverty vary throughout Oregon, with children in rural areas more likely to live in impoverished households. The initiative will work to reduce childhood obesity through public policies that promote active living and healthy eating.

"We are in danger of raising the first generation of children who will live sicker and die younger than the generation before them," Benton County Health Department Deputy Director Charlie Fautin said. "In Oregon, like the rest of the country, obesity rates have skyrocketed among both children and adults, as have rates of related illnesses such as Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and asthma. The project's unique city and county partnership will engage policymakers and diverse community members in strategies to promote healthy eating and active living, benefiting Benton County families for years to come."

Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities is a \$33 million national program and RWJF's



Access to healthy foods is key to a healthy community.

largest investment to date in community-based solutions to reduce childhood obesity. With nine leading sites chosen in late 2008, the program now spans 50 communities from Seattle to Puerto Rico. All are targeting improvements in local policies and their community environment – changes that research indicates could help children eat healthier and be more active, thereby preventing obesity. Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities is a cornerstone of RWJF's \$500 million commitment to reverse the country's childhood obesity epidemic by 2015.

### County names new Human Resources Director

Benton County has appointed Tracy Martineau as its human resources director.

Martineau comes to Benton County from the State of Oregon Employment Department, where she served as human resources manager. Prior to that, Martineau was human resources director for the University of Oregon Foundation, the State of Oregon Housing and Community Services Department and the Chico Unified School District in California. A resident of Corvallis, Martineau said she is happy to be able to finally work in her home community.

"Benton County has a reputation throughout the state for leadership and innovation," she said. "As a member of the Benton County community, I am especially excited at the prospect of being part of this team and contributing my efforts in providing high-quality human resource services."

Martineau – who began March 23 – succeeds Libet Hatch, who is retiring after a long career in human resources management for several major employers in the Corvallis area. Hatch will continue serving the community in a variety of ways, including participation on boards and commissions, as well as helping to assure a successful start for Martineau.

## Creating a salmon-friendly habitat starts at home

Even though we're not expecting a coho salmon to come calling – other than perhaps for the occasional barbecue – Benton County Environmental Issues Advisory Committee (EIAC) is inviting residents to join them in making their yards and gardens salmon-friendly.

To ensure the rainfall and irrigation water runoff from residential areas is conducive to healthy fish populations in our streams and rivers, the EIAC offers the following suggestions applied to outdoor activities that can help salmon thrive. By completing some of these activities, residents can earn Healthy Lawns Ladybug decals to display proudly as they see fit.

### Protect and Build Healthy Soil

- Use compost to create healthy soil without fertilizers.
- Use "natural organic" or "slow-release" fertilizers. They last longer, enhance soil life and don't easily wash off into streams.
- Consider environmentally friendly alternatives prior to using weed and feed products.

For more information, visit <http://www.healthylawns.org>.

### Landscape Naturally

- Landscape with native plants in place of grass and invasive or non-native ornamentals. Natives are better adapted to seasonal changes in the Willamette Valley.
- Landscape to avoid runoff.
- Minimize lawn areas.

- Plant trees, shrubs and ground covers because they require less water and fertilizer. For more information, visit <http://www.npsoregon.org>.

### Use Water Wisely

- Use soaker hoses and drip irrigation. This will grow healthier plants with at least 50 percent less water.
- Water slowly and periodically to grow deep roots and prevent disease. Soak the roots, then let the top few inches of soil dry before watering again.
- Choose plants that need little or no irrigation.
- Water early, or late in the day.
- Sweep, don't hose patios and paved areas. For more information, visit [http://www.seattle.gov/util/Services/Yard/Natural\\_Lawn\\_&\\_Garden\\_Care/Smart\\_Watering/SPU03\\_0091903.asp](http://www.seattle.gov/util/Services/Yard/Natural_Lawn_&_Garden_Care/Smart_Watering/SPU03_0091903.asp), <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/yamhill/waterwisetm-gardening/feed> and <http://www.cropinfo.net/drip.htm>.

### Prevent Water Pollution

- Wash cars at a car wash or off the pavement.
- Prevent oil leaks.
- Maintain septic tanks. For more information, visit <http://lepq.gov/nps/toolbox/print/psatautooil.pdf>, <http://www.cleanriversandstreams.org/#auto> and <http://www.co.benton.or.us/health/environmental/septic.php>.

### Use Natural Pesticide Control

- Weed-whack, cover with mulch or pull weeds.
- Join Benton County's No Spray Program to manage roadside weeds.
- If needed, spot spray to minimize herbicide use. For more information, visit [http://www.seattle.gov/util/Services/Yard/Natural\\_Lawn\\_&\\_Garden\\_Care/index](http://www.seattle.gov/util/Services/Yard/Natural_Lawn_&_Garden_Care/index) and <http://www.col.benton.or.us/pw/roads/nosprayprogram.php>.

### Care for Animals Wisely

- Pick up after pooches and then bury or dispose of the waste in a trash can.
- Fence animal areas away from streams, ditches and other wet areas. For more information, visit [http://www.ci.corvallis.or.us/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=3812&Itemid=4390](http://www.ci.corvallis.or.us/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3812&Itemid=4390).

### Keep Natural Areas Natural

- Revitalize, widen and/or restore riparian buffers.
- Keep ditches vegetated with native or non-invasive grasses and/or shrubs. For more information, visit <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/EOARC/research/home/documents/392c.pdf> and [http://www.col.benton.or.us/parks/documents/lif\\_plan\\_apdx06.pdf](http://www.col.benton.or.us/parks/documents/lif_plan_apdx06.pdf). Once some or all of these steps are completed, those interested can find out how to receive their Healthy Lawns Ladybug decal by visiting <http://healthylawns.org/act>.