

# NEWS from BENTON COUNTY

At Your Service...Every Day



April 2009

Benton County, Oregon

## Welcome from Jay Dixon

Thank you for taking time to read the inaugural edition of Benton County's quarterly newsletter! A survey we conducted some time ago revealed that a quarter of Benton County residents could not name a single service they received from our county government. That was a strong statement to us that we need to do a better job informing you about the services we provide with your tax dollars.

This newsletter is one way of improving our communications with you. Increasing public awareness builds a more engaged body of residents. We want everyone who resides here to have an understanding of and ownership in the initiatives Benton County is pursuing.

While the primary purpose of this publication is to better inform you about what your county government is doing, we also will provide an opportunity for dialogue. We'd like to hear your thoughts and ideas about Benton County government and services. One way we will do that is through a series of public meetings scheduled throughout the year in varying locations in Benton County. We will let you know when and where those will be held. You may also e-mail us any time at [bocinfo@co.benton.or.us](mailto:bocinfo@co.benton.or.us) or call the Board of Commissioners'



Jay Dixon, Chair, Benton County Board of Commissioners

offices at (541) 766-6800.

By better informing you about the services we provide every day in Benton County and by opening new lines of communication with you, we will better serve you every day. After all, that's Benton County's motto - At Your Service Every Day!

Jay Dixon, Chair  
Benton County Board of  
Commissioners

## Oath of Office: Two commissioners, DA sworn in

Three Benton County elected officials received the Administration of the Oath of Office in a public ceremony in January.

Commissioners Annabelle Jaramillo and Jay Dixon and District Attorney John Haroldson were sworn in by presiding Judge Locke Williams on Jan. 5 at the Benton County Courthouse. Dixon is serving this year as Board Chair and Jaramillo is serving as Vice Chair.

Dixon is entering his third term of office after previously serving as an elected member of the Corvallis 509J School Board. Dixon brings years of experience from a distinguished career in business, law enforcement and government service. He is to serve as Board of Commissioners Chair for the coming year, and also chairs the Cascades West Council of Governments. Dixon holds a bachelor's degree from the University of San Francisco.

"We know there will be challenges ahead but challenging times bring opportunities," Dixon said. "Benton County is in sound condition and we are positioned to capitalize on whatever opportunities might arise."



Left to right: Judge Locke Williams, John Haroldson, District Attorney, Annabelle Jaramillo, and Jay Dixon, Commissioners.

Jaramillo also is beginning her third term on the Board of Commissioners. She brings experience in government service and the scientific field. Jaramillo served as Gov. John Kitzhaber's Citizens' Representative for five years and she also worked as a research botanist for the United States Forest Service. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees in science from Portland State University. Jaramillo shared Dixon's caution about the year ahead as well as his optimism for the state of Benton County.

"I really like to think about it as our glass is half full," she said, "and we are going to be successful."

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## County freezes non-represented employee salaries

Benton County elected officials and department heads recently announced a plan to freeze the salaries of all non-represented Benton County employees.

The move is expected to save approximately a million dollars in the next biennium and will impact 87 employees, including elected officials, who are not represented by labor unions. This is one way Benton County plans to efficiently use its resources to continue offering needed services including infrastructure repairs, health

services, public safety and criminal prosecution, among many others.

Benton County leaders are mindful of the bleak economic forecasts in the coming months and it is in the county's best interest to make fiscally responsible decisions to continue providing high quality services as efficiently as possible.

"Despite some turbulence ahead, Benton County remains on better footing than many other counties around the state," Board Chair Jay

Dixon said. "While we will not emerge unaffected by the current climate, we will need to find ways to maximize the efficiency of the funding we receive to continue providing top quality services."

The Benton County management team, which is made up of the Board of Commissioners and department heads, came up with this action to offset forecasted budget shortages that now are certain to include decreases in state funding for mental health services, road

repairs and other essential services. It also shows Benton County's willingness to share in the economic burden faced across Oregon and the country.

"When the state and nation are in a deep economic crisis, the impacts are felt even more at the county level," Dixon said. "When everyone is willing to give up a little we all can continue to offer as many vital county services as possible and use our funds more efficiently to best serve the people of Benton County."

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## HCP process moves into next stages

Benton County is moving forward with the next phase of planning for a Prairie Species Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), which would focus on creating a Prairie Conservation Strategy to guide collaborative efforts to recover, restore and enhance populations of rare and endangered species in the county.

The HCP is designed to achieve long-term viability of rare species populations in the county by avoiding, minimizing and mitigating impacts from essential public services, public land management and limited home, farm and forest construction. The completed plan will include a Prairie Conservation Strategy.

With an HCP in place, the county would be able to coordinate efforts to better plan and ensure conservation of prairie species either listed or in danger of becoming listed, by creating designated mitigation sites to help the various species survive, thrive and grow. These species include the Fender's Blue butterfly, Taylor's Checkerspot butterfly, Kincaid's lupine, peacock larkspur, Willamette daisy, Bradshaw's lomatium and Nelson's checkermallow.

The county currently is compiling its list of written and oral comments from a series of public meetings held in January at three different locations around the county. Those will be incorporated where appropriate and all comments will be available along with the final draft of the document once it is completed.

The expected next step in the process will be to submit a revised copy of the HCP to the Benton County Board of Commissioners for approval. If it clears that step, it will be submitted to the

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for their review and additional public comment. Final revisions then would be completed. The HCP would allow the county to carry out essential public services alongside county roads and in other areas – with mitigation for any loss of endangered species or habitat being conducted at a designated location – as well as enabling private property owners to undertake county permitted construction activities without fear of violating the Endangered Species Act.

If the HCP is adopted, Benton County landowners who live in areas likely to contain habitat for the endangered Fender's Blue butterfly will have the option of having the county mitigate for potential habitat loss caused by the landowner's construction activities at a shared cost between the landowner and Benton County. This eliminates the requirement to obtain approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for every construction project. Obtaining such a permit from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can be expensive and daunting for landowners.

The HCP, funded by a grant from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, expands upon current conservation efforts by increasing conservation opportunities on public and private lands, provides long-term protection of sensitive species and habitats and develops a more ecological and economical approach to species conservation and habitat mitigation.

For more information about the HCP and to subscribe to e-mail updates, those interested can go online to <http://www.co.benton.or.us/parks/hcp/index.php>.



## Benton County announces Fair & Rodeo schedule

"Carnival Lights and Country Nights" will be the theme of this year's Benton County Fair & Rodeo, scheduled July 29 through Aug. 1 at the Benton County Fairgrounds in Corvallis.

This year's Benton County Fair & Rodeo Queen is Cera Kim and she is representing Benton County as a goodwill ambassador in about 15 fairs, rodeos and parades around the Willamette Valley and on the coast.

This year's fair features four days of family entertainment headlined by Diamond Rio and including Country Music Association New Country Artist of the Year and Grammy nominee Lady Antebellum on Thursday of Fair week along with rock legends The Edgar Winter Band and Bad Company former lead singer Brian Howe, both set to perform on Friday night. Sticking with tradition, Johnny Limbo and the Lugnuts once again will perform on Saturday night during the fair.

Special promotions during the fair include:

- Wednesday is Kids Day and children 12 and younger can attend for free

## CWPP creates fire prevention opportunities

As people move to more rural neighborhoods on the outskirts of town it has become increasingly important to work even harder to prevent wildfires.

As part of its Community Wildfire Protection Plan, Benton County is teaming up with the Benton County-Oregon State University Extension Service, fire protection districts and several other partners to educate landowners in the wildland-urban interface areas throughout the county on ways to protect homes from wildfire. Wildland-urban interface areas are defined as areas where building structures and other human developments meet and intermingle with undeveloped wildland areas.

The risk of wildfire is great in those areas, even in Benton County with its plentiful annual rainfall. Once healthy grasses and other vegetation dry out in the heat of summer it takes a relatively low ignition temperature to trigger a



Cera Kim, Benton County Rodeo Queen

- all day;
  - Thursday is American Hero Day and all seniors, first responders, military members and veterans get into the fair free until 5 p.m. with proper identification; and
  - Friday is Sesquicentennial Day to celebrate Oregon's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday and everyone gets into the fair for \$1.50 until 1:50 p.m.
- Tickets go on sale June 2. For more information or to purchase tickets, those interested can go online to <http://www.bentoncountyfair.com>.

fire with potential to spread rapidly, destroying homes and properties.

The Community Wildfire Protection Plan calls for various education and outreach activities – funded by a federal Title III grant – to include fire school training for landowners and volunteers, educational workshops and other activities. There are many ways that landowners in wildland-urban interfaces can make their homes more fire resistant while doing spring spruce-up activities around the home. Those include:

- Creating defensible space around the home;
- Using fire-resistant construction materials; and
- Creating a fire-resistant landscape.

Details about how to do all of those things and other information about making properties more fire resistant can be found online at <http://www.co.benton.or.us/cd/cwpp/protect.php>.



## Benton County jail is a community of its own

By Lt. Chris Schlegel

*Corrections Facility Manager*

The Benton County Corrections Facility is more than just the building that sits next to our historic County Courthouse. The jail houses individuals who are incarcerated for many different reasons. It is the duty of the Sheriff to insure their safekeeping, the safety of those who work in the facility, and to protect the community.

The jail is essentially a community within the community. Inmates have housing areas where they live and are responsible for keeping clean. Medical care is provided by a nurse, doctor and psychiatrist.

A library is available to inmates to check out books to read. Exercise equipment is available in an outdoor area to provide an opportunity to begin developing healthier lifestyles.

Religious services, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and other classes are offered to inmates to help them with their potential transition back into the community. With some limitations we offer public visitation, which allows the inmate to maintain contact with family.

The 8,000-square-foot Benton County facility, with an original designed capacity of 27 beds, is the smallest jail facility per capita



*Lt. Chris Schlegel, Corrections Facility Manager*

in Oregon. As a result, Benton County often rents bed space from neighboring counties for inmates.

Life behind the walls is much different than portrayed on television. It is literally an area where professionals work to be good stewards of taxpayer money while attempting to make differences in the lives of those who have made bad choices. We invite you to make an appointment to come and see this community, which the outside community knows so little about. To schedule a jail tour, please call the Benton County jail at (541) 766-6866.

general destruction that compromises the park's potential as a place for family-oriented activities.

Uncontrolled motor vehicle access and abuse at the site has resulted in erosion, litter, creation of unauthorized roads, vehicle abandonment and destruction of riparian vegetation at the site. The gate also is expected to deter illegal activities such as criminal mischief and minor thefts that occur on the site after hours. All Benton County parks, except campgrounds, close at dark.

Several other community members and outdoor enthusiasts who wish to continue accessing the river through the park spoke out in opposition to a gate and several alternatives were proposed including the possibility of stepping up police patrols in that area and posting

## Commissioner Modrell is AOC president

Benton County Commissioner Linda Modrell is doing something that no other local Benton County commissioner has done since 1955 – she is serving as the president of the Association of Oregon Counties.

Commissioner George I. McBee, who held the post in 1955, was the last Benton County commissioner to serve as AOC president. Modrell is a third-term Benton County commissioner who has risen through the ranks by serving as first and second vice president of the association before taking on her current role. Modrell also has served as chair of the Revenue Policy Steering Committee and Governance Steering Committee for the organization.

Modrell has served on the Benton County Board of Commissioners since 1999, last year as board chair. Prior to serving as a commissioner, she worked at Oregon State University and in health policy, including serving on the team that developed the Oregon Health Plan. On the Board of Commissioners her major areas of focus include transportation, health services, water and governance issues.

Oregon counties are working with legislators and the Governor's Office to continue making delivery of county services more efficient and effective to



*Linda Modrell, Benton County Commissioner*

benefit all Oregonians. AOC is crucial in helping counties continue to better serve their residents by providing a strong, unified voice in Salem.

George Irwin McBee – the last AOC president from Benton County – was the son of early Benton County settlers. He attended Benton County and Corvallis schools before enrolling in Oregon State College. He became Benton County judge in 1942, and served in that role until his death in 1955.

AOC represents all 36 Oregon counties and works continuously with Oregon's Congressional delegation. For more information about AOC activities and news, those interested can go online to it all <http://www.aocweb.org>.

## Parks Board considers gate at Irish Bend

Whether to install a gate at Irish Bend Park in Benton County was the topic of a community meeting of the Natural Areas and Parks Advisory Board recently.

The board toured the site of the park on the Willamette River near Monroe and met a short while later at the Monroe Fire Station to hear community input. Benton County Sheriff Diana Simpson attended the site visit at the park to provide a law enforcement perspective.

Some neighbors expressed the need for a gate to limit motorized vehicle traffic on the park grounds. The park has been damaged continually over the last couple of years due largely to unauthorized on-site motor vehicle use. They complained of vandalism, transients camping at the location and



*Garbage and abandoned vehicles at Irish Bend Park are forcing consideration of a gate.*

a camp watchman at the site. The gate still would allow foot access to the park for recreational activities and special permits could be made available for vehicles to access the park, as deemed appropriate by the Natural Areas and

Parks Department.

The Parks Advisory Board ultimately will make a recommendation to the Benton County Board of Commissioners regarding the gate and any other associated management actions.



## Public Works resumes roadside vegetation efforts this month

The Benton County Public Works Department is gearing up for annual activities to control vegetation alongside county roads and in roadside ditches.

Benton County work crews will begin spraying roadsides this month, kicking off its annual Roadside Shoulder Spraying Program, in order to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, maintain clear, safe roadsides by maximizing visibility and protect beneficial vegetation. The Benton County Public Works Department is responsible for the maintenance of all county rights of way.

The county's vegetation management program utilizes manual, mechanical and chemical techniques to meet the demand of public safety while balancing environmental responsibility. Over the last 10 years new programs continue to be put into place to meet state and federal mandates for clean water and endangered species protection. Those programs include National Pollution Discharge Elimination Systems, Total Maximum Daily Loads and most recently the Habitat Conservation Plan program. These programs have helped shape some of the changes on how the county does this work.

Benton County's goals with roadside vegetation management are to:

- Improve safety for the traveling public by eliminating site distance issues and hazard tree removal;
- Provide good stewardship of the environment through control of noxious weeds;
- Maintain and preserve public facilities such as bridges, culverts and road surfaces through proper vegetation



*One of the areas scheduled for vegetation management.*

removal;

- Promote vegetation in ditches and backslopes to minimize soil erosion, reduce pollutants and improve water quality; and
- Protect threatened and endangered plants that occur in county rights of way.

Part of the vegetation program is to offer the citizens of Benton County a No-Spray Program for those who don't wish to have herbicides used in the right of way adjacent to their properties. The agreement must be renewed annually and the property owner takes on the responsibility of maintaining vegetation and noxious weed control.

For more information about noxious weeds, roadside spraying and no-spray and modified spray agreements, those interested can call (541) 766-6821 or go online to <http://www.co.benton.or.us/pw/roads/#vegetation>.

## Oath of Office *Continued from page 1*

Haroldson is beginning his first term of elected office after being appointed to the District Attorney post by Gov. Ted Kulongoski in February 2007. He served as Chief Deputy District Attorney in Benton County from 2002 to 2007 and began his prosecution career in 1988 in Linn County. He holds a bachelor's degree from Central Washington University and Doctorate of Jurisprudence from the University of Oregon.

"We will continue to offer the level of security and accountability the public

deserves," Haroldson said. "The citizens of Benton County have been supportive of our efforts to provide the best criminal justice system possible. This was demonstrated through the passage of the public safety and health levy, as well as the public support we have received in our day-to-day operations and our focused efforts to address drugs in our community. We understand that there will be challenges regarding resources throughout the state. However, we remain committed to providing the best service we can for Benton County."

## Retired to the Road

### Dial-A-Bus work is rewarding to volunteer

When Gary Tiedeman began looking for activities to fill time during his retirement years, he decided upon Dial-A-Bus for the opportunity to contribute to the community.

Five years later the 69-year-old retired Oregon State University sociology professor still is traveling the roads of Benton County giving people rides to medical appointments, grocery shopping and myriad other activities. He is making a difference in the lives of Benton County residents and the people he serves are impacting him, as well. Tiedeman certainly has his favorite regular passengers he looks forward to seeing every week, including one person from Monroe he transports to a weekly dialysis treatment appointment in Corvallis.

"It's more like having some regular riders every week than it is a duplicate set schedule," Tiedeman said. "I feel you certainly develop lots of favorite type people you become very fond of."

Dial-A-Bus operates on a contract with Benton County. It is funded through state and federal government and other grants. Volunteer hours are leveraged for



*Gary Tiedeman, Dial-A-Bus volunteer.*

state and federal funding levels.

Every Wednesday afternoon Tiedeman drives a four-hour shift for Dial-A-Bus in addition to numerous other volunteer activities that include work with the Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, Corvallis Repertory Singers and the Oregon State University Retirement Association. He takes passengers to appointments and on a variety of errands.

The service is geared toward those 60 and older and the disabled, offering them a low-cost means of transportation to get around the county. It's extremely rewarding work, according to Tiedeman, who has developed strong personal relationships with many of his regular passengers and other volunteers.

"In a way we get paid," he said. "It's the reward of doing it and doing it well."

## Volunteering is easy

Dial-A-Bus customers in Benton County are many and volunteer drivers are few.

The current count of 35 drivers falls well short of the typical stable of between 45 and 50. On average the Dial-A-Bus organization is giving 6,000 rides a month, and it needs help serving more individuals who need rides. It's not hard to volunteer for Dial-A-Bus. Rides are available for people to travel within Benton County, as well as to Albany and to the coast. Shifts can vary in length and schedules

for drivers are based on individual availability. The only resource it takes from a volunteer is a little time.

"Under the Dial-A-Bus umbrella we do many different things," Dial-A-Bus Director Linda Elder said. "We have insurance coverage, provide the cars and pay for fuel. All people really need to volunteer is a compassion for the people we serve."

For more information about volunteering for Dial-A-Bus, those interested can contact Director of Dial-A-Bus Linda Elder at (541) 753-5746.

## Benton County Offices

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

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