

NEWS from BENTON COUNTY

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Benton County, Oregon

Volume 1, Issue 2



Community members look over decks to be re-used on a Benton County bridge.

Recycling is a Benton County mantra

When people think of recycling, they often envision milk jugs, paper and soda cans, but Benton County Public Works goes out of its way to implement that philosophy on a much larger scale when it comes to building bridges and paving roads.

Benton County purchases second-hand bridge slabs and asphalt grindings from other agencies and uses those materials to patch county roads and replace bridges. It is an environmentally responsible way to carry out vital public services – reducing the amount of waste going to landfills – and it also provides a cost savings to the county.

Many smaller Benton County bridges are constructed with recycled bridge decks. The county acquires concrete bridge decks that are a foot thick, three feet wide and of varying lengths from other agencies after bridges are dismantled. The pieces can be stacked side-by-side to form bridges. The decks come at about a tenth of the cost of new construction.

Recycled Bridges

Following is a list of recycled bridges currently in use or planned for construction throughout Benton County, followed by the completion date in parentheses:

- Seavy Bridge No. 14034-04 (2007)
- Hoskins Bridge No. 06540-61 (2008)
- Stow Pit Bridge No. 45121-01 (2009)
- Price Creek Bridge No. 06054-10 (2010)
- Hoskins Bridge No. 06540-77 (2010)
- Bellfountain Bridge No. 25100-164 (2011)

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County begins new budget biennium

In the face of an ongoing economic recession bringing bleak financial forecasts Benton County is moving forward on solid financial ground due to conservative forecasting, prudent fiscal management and voters' support of a supplemental levy.

Some services such as road construction and maintenance, community corrections and mental health rely heavily on state funding or shared revenues. But because of conservative estimates on the part of Benton County officials the county's proposed budget in those areas appears to be consistent with the direction the legislature is moving on the state budget. Currently, the county is operating on a \$162 million

budget for the biennium. In the next biennium, beginning July 1, Benton County's proposed budget is \$171 million. Benton County implemented a salary freeze among all non-union employees that is expected to save the county nearly \$1 million.

"With careful management of resources and hopefully some improvement in the state economy we will be able to manage fairly well," Benton County Budget Manager Pat Cochran said.

The voters of Benton County approved the Health and Public Safety Levy in 2007 to continue offering vital services. District Attorney John

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Benton County gears up for Fair and Rodeo

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

This year's Benton County Fair & Rodeo Queen is Cera Kem 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.

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



Benton County fair-goers enjoying the midway.

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 free all day.

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County Budget *Continued from page 1*

Haroldson said the levy has helped his office stay on top of a large annual caseload with the addition of two prosecutors and a paralegal.

"The Health and Public Safety Levy has insured that our office has been able to continue in prosecutorial functions, and has also resulted in a successful effort to reduce crime by 18 percent while preparing for an annual average of 13,000 court cases," Haroldson said, adding that it also has helped his office focus on child abuse, drug and street crimes. "Those are areas where we have continued to make significant progress and enhanced our efforts through the Benton County Drug Treatment Court."

Sheriff Diana Simpson said the levy has been extremely beneficial to her office in providing a greater level of

public safety in Benton County by allowing the office to continue renting jail beds in other counties to house suspects.

"Basically the levy has allowed us to begin the recruiting, hiring and training of new deputies so we can get back to 24-7 patrol coverage," Simpson said. "It's been very critical for us as far as being able to provide the public safety we need for county residents."

The Board of Commissioners also has followed through on its promise to reduce local option levy collections based on federal forest receipts, which are scheduled to diminish in coming years. In the 2008 tax year, the county collected the maximum 90 cents per thousand dollars of assessed value for the local option levy. In 2009 the rate will be 59 cents and in 2010 it will be 67 cents per thousand of assessed value.

Market value is not the taxable value

When economic downturns cause home values to drop many property owners often expect lower property taxes, but because of current tax laws that isn't often the case.

There are two primary kinds of property values in Oregon. Real Market Value is the price that a property owner could expect to sell a home for on the open market. Maximum Assessed Value – approved by voters in 1997 as part of Measure 50 – is the property value that county assessors are mandated by law to use when determining the amount of taxes due. Maximum Assessed Value is almost always much lower than the Real Market Value.

When Measure 50 came into effect, it created a new method of valuing structures and properties for tax purposes. The Maximum Assessed Value was calculated in 1997 by using the Real Market Value of each property from 1995. The 1995 value was discounted by 10 percent, providing the first Maximum Assessed Value calculations. Those values have increased by 3 percent annually since then, in accordance with Measure 50.

The Maximum Assessed Value calculation is very different from Real Market Value. Real Market Value is based on appraisal values and market conditions such as supply and demand

to determine the selling price of a home, structure or other piece of property.

In essence, Maximum Assessed Value takes a baseline snapshot for a property and raises it 3 percent every year regardless of Real Market Value. As a result, over the last 12 years the two values have grown farther apart. That is why property taxes (based on Maximum Assessed Value) can rise from one year to the next while a property's Real Market Value declines and, in other cases, why Maximum Assessed Value can fail to keep pace with rapidly rising Real Market Value.

According to Benton County Assessor Doug Hillpot, a property can be taxed based on Real Market Value only when the Real Market Value is lower than the Maximum Assessed Value. But the average Corvallis property has a Real Market Value 40 percent higher than Maximum Assessed Value, he said, so Real Market Value usually is not used to calculate taxes, and it wouldn't be in the best interest of the property owner to do so.

As property taxes become due on Nov. 15 it is important and helpful to understand the difference between Real Market Value for property and the Maximum Assessed Value so that there are no surprises in the statement.

Counties and state government working together

The state of Oregon and counties throughout the state are responsible for a broad scope of services. Some services are offered solely by one governmental body, but many more are offered through partnerships between counties and the state. Following is a breakdown of how those services are divided:

Health and Human Services

County: Solid Waste Management, Recycling Programs, Restaurant Inspections.

State: Child Protection, Housing, Mental Health Hospital.

Shared Services: Aging/Senior Services, Alcohol/Drug Treatment, Alcohol/Drug Prevention, Children and Families Services, Developmentally Disabled Services, Mental Health Services, Oregon Health Plan Services, Veterans Services, Public Health Services, Medical Examiner, Emergency Planning and Response.

Public Safety

County: Sheriff Patrol, Animal Control, Justice Courts, Search and Rescue, County Jail.

State: Appellate Court, State Police, State Prison, Attorney General.

Shared Services: Trial Courts, District Attorney, 911/Emergency Communications, Emergency Management, Homeland Security, Community Corrections, Court Security, Juvenile Services, Marine Patrol, Drug Courts, County Law Library.

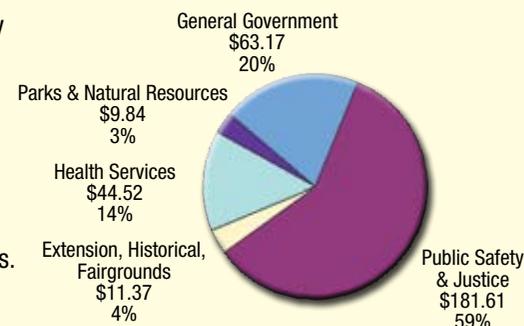
Natural Resources and Recreation

County: County Forest Management, County Parks, Soil and Water Conservation, Management of Open Spaces.

State: State Parks, State Lands, Water Regulation, Wildlife Regulation.

Shared Services: County Forest Trust

Allocation of Property Tax Dollars for Services
2008-09 Biennium Budget



Lands/State Forest Management, Habitat Restoration, Wildlife/Predator Control, Federal Land Policy, Noxious Weed Control, Watermaster.

Transportation, Land Use and Economic Development

County: Surveying, County Transportation System, Roads, Building Permits and Inspection.

State: State Highways, State Fair.

Shared Services: Land Use Planning and Coordination, Land Use Permitting, Highway and Road System, Senior and Disabled Transportation, Energy Development, Engineering, Economic Development, County Fair, Infrastructure Development.

Other Community Services

County: Administrative Services, Procurement, Recording Public Documents, City/County Library, County Museum, County Service Districts.

State: Administrative Services.

Shared Services: Assessment and Taxation, Public Employees Retirement System, Employee/Labor Relations, Elections, Extension Service, Telecommunications.

– Information provided by Association of Oregon Counties

Benton County Offices

Board of Commissioners	(541) 766-6800	Human Resources	(541) 766-6081
Assessment Department	(541) 766-6855	Community Health Center	(541) 766-6835
Commission on Children and Families	(541) 766-6751	Juvenile Department	(541) 766-6810
Development Department	(541) 766-6819	Natural Areas and Parks	(541) 766-6871
District Attorney	(541) 766-6815	OSU Extension Service	(541) 766-6750
Elections	(541) 766-6756	Public Works	(541) 766-6821
Fairgrounds	(541) 766-6521	County Clerk/Records	(541) 766-6831
Health Department	(541) 766-6835	Sheriff's Office	(541) 766-6858
		Tax Collection	(541) 766-6808

Local agencies test disaster response capabilities

Emergency service agencies, community groups and public schools joined forces to test their skills in case of the “big one” by participating in a disaster simulation drill April 24 through 29.

Groups carried out a variety of activities in preparation for any natural disasters that could occur in Benton County. Under the guise of an earthquake situation, Benton County, municipal and community groups sprang into action with a variety of simulation activities and tests throughout the county.

School districts – including Corvallis and Philomath – participated in drop, cover and hold drills during the first day while fire departments, law enforcement and others shared information and assessed the situation as though a disaster had occurred. Over the course of the exercise groups in rural areas of the county such as Wren and Alsea tested two-way radio communications activities and mobilized watch groups to check on neighbors.

The Benton County Sheriff’s Office Marine Patrol was in action on April 24 moving key personnel – including Commissioner Linda Modrell and



Commissioner Jay Dixon, left, and Sheriff Diana Simpson work in the Emergency Operating Center.

Undersheriff Scott Jackson – across the Willamette River, in response to reports of collapsed bridges. Benton County Public Works employees inspected bridges to make sure they were safe to use, which is a standard procedure when a bridge is left standing after an earthquake.

Benton County Sheriff’s Office Emergency Services Manager Mary King led the effort, in coordination with the city of Corvallis, city of Philomath, local rural fire protection

districts, local school districts and other agencies and community groups. In all, officials counted the exercise as a success.

“We have put a lot of work into this event,” King said. “We train, practice and exercise so that when a real event occurs locally we are as effective and efficient in our response and recovery efforts as we can possibly be. If this effort can save even one more life during a real incident, our work is justified.”

Sheriff’s Office earns state accreditation

The Benton County Sheriff’s Office learned in the spring that it had earned accreditation through the Oregon Accreditation Alliance (OAA).

Retired Albany Police Chief and current OAA Executive Director Joe Simon conducted an onsite audit of the Sheriff’s Office General Orders, policies and practices to ensure all 100 accreditation standards – including use of force, use of firearms, recruitment, detention, fiscal management and community relations – were being met. Following the two-day audit, Director Simon found the Benton County Sheriff’s Office to be “a well run professional agency” in compliance with all applicable standards. The OAA Board of Directors and Oregon State Sheriff’s Office Association Board of Directors ultimately concluded the approval process on April 14.

“This has been a long, arduous journey for the Benton County Sheriff’s Office, but one that was well worth the effort,” Sheriff Diana Simpson said. “The audit and subsequent accreditation simply documents and confirms we are a professional organization that utilizes the best practices in the industry.”

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County works to close the ‘Greenberry Gap’

The Benton County Board of Commissioners has initiated a community conversation with residents in the Greenberry area – located south of Corvallis and near Philomath and Monroe – about the potential for fire coverage in that area.

Currently that area – comprising 26,000 acres – is not covered by a structure fire protection district. For that reason, it is known by some as the “Greenberry Gap.” One possibility to resolve this issue could be splitting the region’s coverage between the Corvallis, Monroe and Philomath fire departments. The cost for joining a fire protection district would average approximately \$226 per year per property owner.

With fire protection coverage the

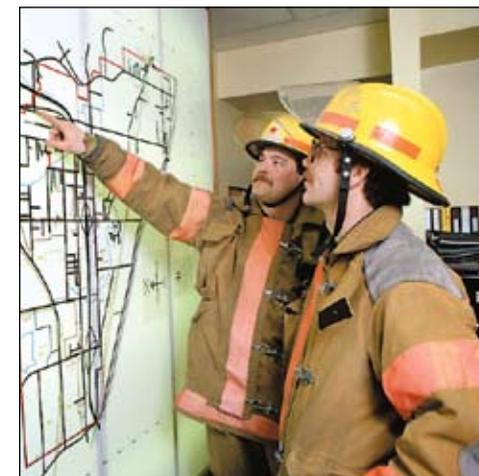
residents might realize annual savings in their home owners’ insurance policies as well as enjoy the safety and well being that is provided through access to home fire protection and other public safety services offered by those fire departments.

In May, the Board of Commissioners met with the community at Muddy Creek Charter School in the Greenberry area to provide information, and hear community members’ questions. County Counsel Vance Croney and the fire chiefs from Corvallis, Monroe and Philomath also attended to talk with the crowd.

Community members voiced mixed opinions about the subject. Some suggested that they would feel safer about having some form of organized

structure fire protection. Others indicated they had the equipment to address structure fires on their own or that it could cost them more money than they are paying now for taxes and homeowners’ insurance. The Board of Commissioners and Benton County staff will work with Greenberry residents until consensus is reached on a solution.

“In the end, the issue of fire coverage in Greenberry is about much more than money,” Commissioner Jay Dixon told the crowd of nearly 40. “It’s about the protective services, professional firefighting and other safety benefits that these agencies can provide to protect your homes, families and livelihoods. These are services that many take for granted, until they are needed most.”



Currently there are 26,000 acres in a pocket between Corvallis, Monroe and Philomath that aren’t served by a rural fire protection district.

Sheriff's Office serves Adair Village

As the city of Adair Village takes steps toward instituting its own municipal police department, the Benton County Sheriff's Office will continue to offer the best possible safety and law enforcement services in Adair Village.

Adair Village recently hired a police chief and purchased equipment with the intent of creating a police department made up of reserve officers. Those services historically have been provided by the Benton County Sheriff's Office, which will continue to play a vital role in meeting the public safety and law enforcement needs in Adair Village.

Currently, calls for emergency, safety and law enforcement services from Adair Village go to the Corvallis Regional Communications Center and Benton County Sheriff's Office personnel respond. Once Adair Village has established its 911 dispatch services and the police department is fully operational, all calls still will go directly to the Corvallis Regional Communications Center, but then would be forwarded to the Adair Village dispatch center during the

department's on-duty hours.

When the Adair Village Police Department is not on duty, the Benton County Sheriff's Office will be dispatched to handle 911 calls from the city of Adair Village. Those calls that can be handled the next day by the Adair Village Police Department will be deferred, but crimes in progress, person-to-person incidents and significant property crimes will be responded to immediately.

Providing public safety throughout the county is paramount to the Benton County Sheriff's Office, which currently covers 679 square miles and serves nearly 85,000 people.

"The residents of Adair Village can expect the same excellent service from the Benton County Sheriff's Office that they have received in the past," Benton County Sheriff Diana Simpson said. "We will respond after the hours of the police department, but now there may be some incidents that are suspended until the chief can respond. The Sheriff's Office will continue to provide the most professional services that we can."

Fair and Rodeo

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- 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.
- Friday is Sesquicentennial Day

to celebrate Oregon's 150th birthday and everyone gets into the Fair for \$1.50 until 1:50 p.m.

Tickets are on sale now. For more information or to purchase tickets, those interested can go online to <http://www.bentoncountyfair.com>.

Recycling

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"There are some bridges where I have \$2,500 invested in the whole deck," Benton County Road Manager Jim Stouder said. "To build those same bridges new I'd be looking at \$25,000 for the deck. It's a huge savings for us."

An excellent example is the Price Creek Bridge. Benton County was paid by Linn County to have workers remove that structure. Following the removal, Benton County will recycle the pieces to build a new bridge at Price Creek. Doing the removal work will allow Benton County Public Works employees to complete the project – which otherwise would range from \$40,000 to \$50,000 – at no cost to the county.

Safety is always the highest priority, and bridge decks are carefully inspected to make sure the concrete is still intact. When concrete on a bridge deck remains intact it protects the rebar and cables inside. Stress fractures can be detrimental to the

structure.

"As long as the concrete stays sealed we're safe," Stouder said.

Benton County began using ground down asphalt in 1995 to raise county roads and make them sturdier. The material comes from city, state and county projects where they grind asphalt roads to meet height requirements and repair deep cracks in the asphalt. Benton County sends a truck to pick up the left-over grindings. Over the past few years due to diminishing road funding Benton County has been relying on this material source even more to resurface roads and carry out other projects. It's all part of maintaining quality county roads with a low operating budget.

"When you use the grindings it's not quite as smooth as other overlays, but it protects roads when there aren't a whole lot of other options available to us," Stouder said. "Then you still have a paved road."

Local performers shine in Teen Idol competition

The Teen Idol competition in Linn and Benton counties wrapped up in May with Megan Knox winning the singers category and Sugardirt emerging as the top band.

Knox, 16, attends East Linn Christian Academy and has been singing for 15 years, having tried out for solos, taken voice lessons and participated in choirs and ensembles.

Sugardirt is an energetic and entertaining band committed to bringing back the roots of American music with a new, refreshing twist and rockabilly image. Members are from Benton and Linn counties and include Brianna Bender, lead vocals and guitar; Lucas Huddleston, bass; Aaron Smith, guitar and vocals; Bradley Armstrong, guitar; and Tyler Murphy, drums.

The seven-concert event, with several talented local teenagers competing for a \$400 prize in two different divisions, wrapped up with its finale during the spring in the Milam Auditorium on the Oregon State University campus in Corvallis.

The annual Teen Idol event – coordinated and implemented by the Corvallis, Monroe and Alsea youth commissions and sponsored by the Benton County Commission on Children and Families and Linn County Commission on Children and Families – is designed as a drug- and alcohol-free activity for young people in Benton and Linn counties, modeled after the television show American Idol.

"The performances were absolutely amazing, and I was surprised that the performers not only sang, but the majority also played instruments while they sang," Benton County Commission on Children and Families Administrative Aide Alicia Griggs said.

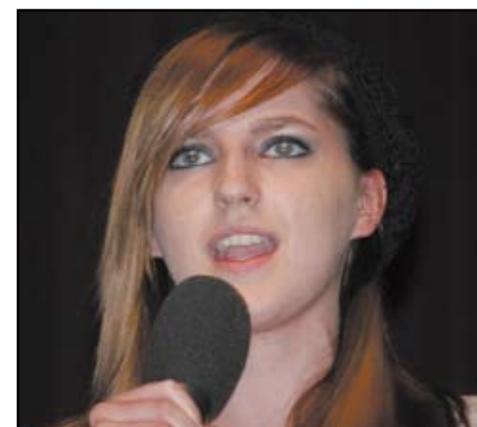
Accreditation

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The Oregon Accreditation Alliance was formed in 2001 under the direction and authority of the Oregon Association of Chiefs of Police, the Oregon State Sheriff's Association and the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials. The alliance mutually supports and endorses the continued improvement of law enforcement and emergency communications services by establishing professional



Sugardirt, 2009 Teen Idol Top Band winners.



Megan Knox 2009 Teen Idol Top Singer winner.

"The contestants' pledge to be drug- and alcohol-free for the seven weeks of the competition was inspirational to the younger crowd who saw role models of theirs being successful without drugs and alcohol."

rigorous standards of accountability, management and operations. When Simpson took office in 2007, she made it a goal for the agency to achieve accreditation, and the Sheriff's Office has been working hard on that goal ever since.

"This was truly a team effort by all members of the Sheriff's Office and without everyone's commitment to the process, we would not have achieved our goal," Simpson said.