

GOAL 8

RECREATIONAL NEEDS

The residents of Benton County value the land – its beauty and life-sustaining qualities. Agricultural and forest lands provide sustenance for residents of the Willamette Valley. These lands and the larger systems of mountains, valleys, rivers and wetlands of which they are part continue to be highly prized economically, culturally, recreationally, environmentally and aesthetically.

Benton County Comprehensive Plan Value Statement

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RECREATIONAL NEEDS

Overview

The goals and policies included in the chapter address planning and management of parks, open space, natural areas and trail systems within Benton County.

Statewide planning directs the County to inventory recreation needs and opportunities and to develop long range plans for meeting the recreational needs of its citizens in coordination with private interests and public agencies.

The Benton County Parks System Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the Board of Commissioners in 1995, provides an assessment of the recreation resources and an outline of opportunities and implementation strategies.

The Benton County Parks Advisory Board is appointed by the Board of Commissioners to enable citizen involvement in all aspects of planning and development for natural areas and parks.

“Benton County Parks Division serves the interests and pursuits of county residents by providing access to natural, historic and recreational areas and conserving, restoring, and developing parkland investments.”

Benton County Parks System
Comprehensive Plan, 1995

Historical Perspective

In 1957, the Benton County Board of Commissioners established a parks board of citizens familiar with rural properties in Benton County and land appropriation. Following a belief that property could be acquired at little or no cost to the taxpayers, Parks Board members T.J. Starker, Margaret Hull, Dr. Quisenberry, Otto Vollstedt, Dee Simpson, and Dr. Peffer, worked countless hours identifying undeveloped sites and negotiating donations or reasonable purchases. In 1960, Benton County held six parks. Development was primarily the responsibility of the Board members who worked with volunteers and donated materials to accomplish their goals. Benton County Public Works Department was responsible for park maintenance once improvements had been made.

The first park planning effort at the County level was a preliminary report prepared in 1967 for the Benton County Planning Commission entitled Benton County Urban Area Park Plan. This document outlined general park needs for the urbanizing areas of Corvallis, Philomath, and North Albany. The report recommended a study of the entire county at a later date.

In early 1970, four additional park sites increased the size of the parks system by two and one-half times (to 245 acres). Development of these sites was considerably more complex and expensive than before. From a recommendation of the Parks Board, the Benton County Board of Commissioners established a separate parks department.

In 1974, the Parks Board developed a comprehensive parks plan. In the late 1970's the Citizens for Benton County Parks Committee was formed and worked to pass a capital improvement levy for county parks. The five-year levy provided \$100,000 per year from 1977 to 1981 for park development. The 1982 revision of the Comprehensive Parks Plan provided guidelines for park development, identified system deficiencies and recommended improvements.

During the early 1990's, a series of public needs assessments identified interest in traditional recreational activities as well as interest in conserving areas of natural and historic value. Soon after, Jackson-Frazier Wetland, Open Space Park (Fitton Green Natural Area) and Fort Hoskins were acquired.

In 1995, the Board of Commissioners adopted the Benton County Parks System Comprehensive Plan. In 2003, the Commissioners changed the name of the Parks Division to the Natural Areas and Parks Department, in response to increasing emphasis on the management and protection of natural, cultural, and historical areas.

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Statewide Planning Goal 8

To satisfy the recreational needs of the citizens of the state and visitors and, where appropriate, to provide for the siting of necessary recreational facilities including destination resorts.

The requirements for meeting such needs, now and in the future, shall be planned for by governmental agencies having responsibility for recreation areas, facilities and opportunities: (1) in coordination with private enterprise; (2) in appropriate proportions; and (3) in such quantity, quality and locations as is consistent with the availability of the resources to meet such requirements. State and federal agency recreation plans shall be coordinated with local and regional recreational needs and plans.

Excerpt from
OAR 660-015-0000(8)

Benton County Goal

Recreational Needs

To maintain a park and open space system that represents the heritage and natural and scenic qualities of Benton County and provides outdoor recreation opportunities that contribute to healthy individuals, children, and families.

Policy Sections

- 8.1 General Policies
- 8.2 Planning/Collaboration
- 8.3 Management
- 8.4 Accessibility
- 8.5 Recreation Trail System

Cross-References

- Additional policies related to this goal:
- Goal 2 Land Use Planning
 - Goal 5 Natural Resources
 - Goal 15 Willamette River Greenway



Bezell Memorial Forest - Meadow Enhancement

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Policies

- 8.1.1** Benton County shall establish a policy framework for planning and managing Benton County parks and natural areas that emphasizes maintaining scenic and outdoor recreation opportunities for present and future generations, protecting and restoring significant natural and historic areas and resources, supporting sustainable growth and development, and developing collaborative partnerships with residents and others.
- 8.1.2** Benton County shall actively participate in updates of the Oregon Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, which will assist in providing current information on county and regional outdoor recreation needs and priorities.
- 8.1.3** Benton County shall maintain a distinct role and mission for county parks and natural areas that complements programs of urban service providers and places a high priority on public access to and protection and restoration of significant scenic, outdoor recreation, historic, cultural, and natural resources. Education, public awareness, and interpretive programs are integral to this mission.
- 8.1.4** Benton County shall respect private property rights and landowner concerns, maintain a good-neighbor philosophy, and develop partnerships and creative solutions that meet mutual objectives when acquiring, developing, and managing parks and natural areas.
- 8.1.5** Benton County shall work with the Forest Service and ODOT to provide public access opportunities for winter recreational activities at Marys Peak.
- 8.1.6** Benton County shall place a high priority on collaboration with citizens and others by creating and maintaining partnerships, cultivating volunteers, and promoting a sense of ownership, pride, and respect for natural, historic, recreational, and cultural resource values.

8.1 General Policies

Defined Terms

- conservation easement
- historic areas
- natural area
- open space
- restoration
- sustainable
- transportation modes

See **Appendix** for definitions



Fitton Green Natural Area

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8.2

Planning/ Collaboration

Associated Plans

- Oregon Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2004
- Benton County Parks System Comprehensive Plan, 1995
- Oregon Statewide Trails Plan
- Benton County Trails System Plan, 2003
- Corvallis 2020 Vision Statement

County Boards & Committees:

- Benton County Parks Advisory Board
- Fort Hoskins Technical Advisory Committee

Policies

- 8.2.1** When Benton County acquires new natural area or park sites, the County shall prepare management plans to provide policy direction for visitor use, maintenance, restoration and protection, interpretation, and education for these areas. These plans shall be periodically updated.
- 8.2.2** Benton County shall avoid overlap and duplication of services by coordinating its park planning and management programs with federal and state agencies, local municipalities, and other providers, recognizing the important role of multiple providers as part of a comprehensive park and open space system.
- 8.2.3** Benton County shall strive to develop a strong working relationship with the cities of Corvallis, Albany, Philomath, Adair, and Monroe, the development community, landowners, and non-profit organizations to assure protection of scenic, natural and recreational values in the urban interface area.
- 8.2.4** Benton County shall actively support unincorporated communities in developing and implementing strategic plans to incorporate scenic amenities and outdoor recreation opportunities.



Benton County Parks Advisory Board

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Policies

- 8.3.1** Benton County shall work with volunteers, park visitors, community organizations, and public agencies to minimize conflicts among recreational users, as well as minimize recreational impacts on natural resources.
- 8.3.2** Benton County shall pursue a variety of avenues to fund, acquire, rehabilitate, and maintain County parks and facilities to maintain high standards and desired level of service.
- 8.3.3** Benton County shall make environmental, cultural and historic interpretation, education, and research key elements of the park and open space system, providing opportunities for learning and information exchange in creative and attractive ways.
- 8.3.4** Benton County shall foster relationships with Native American Tribes to enhance cultural resource opportunities.

8.3 Management

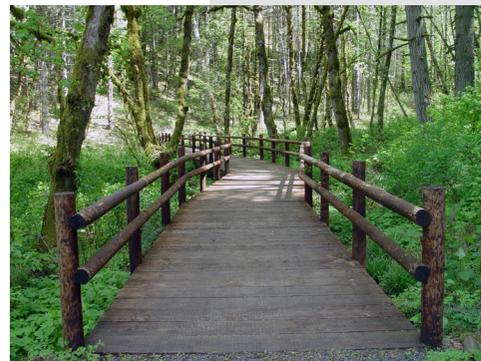


Fort Hoskins

Policies

- 8.4.1** Where appropriate, Benton County shall make its parks, natural areas, and open spaces accessible to persons with disabilities, in keeping with the American with Disabilities Act.
- 8.4.2** Benton County shall ensure that a portion of the recreational opportunities it provides are available free of charge or for minimal fee.

8.4 Accessibility



Bezell Memorial Forest

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8.5 Recreational Trail System



Policies

- 8.5.1 Benton County shall establish a policy framework for maintaining a network of trails that provide connections between public open space, natural areas, and communities, designed for a variety of non-motorized recreation and transportation modes.
- 8.5.2 Benton County shall coordinate with the Oregon Recreation Trails Plan in efforts to link local trails with the state trails system.
- 8.5.3 Benton County shall cooperate with landowners when developing a trail system. Emphasis will be placed on managing public access to avoid trespass and/or other impacts on private property, such as wildfires.
- 8.5.4 When feasible, Benton County shall obtain trail easements and develop trails prior to, or simultaneously with, residential development.
- 8.5.5 When siting new trails, Benton County shall prioritize locating trails independently from roadways and shall emphasize use of existing rights-of-way (such as railroad right-of-way).
- 8.5.6 Benton County shall coordinate trail planning, funding, construction, and maintenance with the Benton County Transportation System Plan as well as among all levels of government including municipalities, Oregon State University, U. S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, interested organizations, and the general public.
- 8.5.7 Benton County shall continue to actively participate in efforts to develop a water trail along the Willamette River, with public lands serving as public access, while working with willing landowners to acquire access and conservation easements.
- 8.5.8 Benton County shall maintain a Comprehensive Trail System Plan that is adopted by the Board of Commissioners.

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Findings and References

8.1 General

8.1.a The 2003-2007 Oregon Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan identifies three top statewide outdoor recreation needs: (1) recreation trails and trail connectivity, (2) land acquisition, and (3) water-based recreation resources and facilities. Top funding priorities for Benton County include: (1) major rehabilitation of existing outdoor recreation facilities, (2) non-motorized trail connectivity, and (3) river corridor acquisition.

2004 State Comp. Outdoor Recreation Plan

8.1.b Parks provide intrinsic environmental, aesthetic, recreation, and positive economic benefits. They enhance property values, increase revenue from tourism, and attract homebuyers and retirees. Parks are a good financial investment.

American Planning Association, Economic Development, 2002

8.1.c Benton County has achieved wide recognition for a variety of habitat restoration projects involving state and federal agencies, natural scientists, volunteers, and non-profit organizations.

Benton Co. Natural Areas & Parks Dept.

8.1.d The Willamette River and its tributaries are central to daily life in Corvallis and Eugene.

Willamette Restoration Initiative, 1999

8.1.e In 1976, it was estimated that the economic value of anadromous fishing amounted to over \$900,000 annually in Benton County. The major anadromous fisheries occur in the Alsea system, and heaviest angling takes place on the mainstem Alsea River and on the North Fork Alsea below the hatchery.

Background Report
1979 Benton Co. Comp Plan

8.1.f Residents place a high value on the scenic qualities of the Benton County landscape, including views of farms and forestlands, mountains, rivers, and wetlands.

Background Report
1979 Benton Co. Comp Plan

8.1.g Views from improved roadways, highways, and trails are important to Benton County residents.

Background Report
1979 Benton Co. Comp Plan

8.2 Planning/Collaboration

8.2.a In 2003, the Board of Commissioners changed the name of the Benton County Parks Division to the Benton County Natural Areas and Parks Department, in response to increasing emphasis on management and protection of natural, cultural, and historical areas.

8.2.b The Benton County Parks System Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1995, establishes a policy framework for planning and managing parks and natural areas, with emphasis on: (1) growth and development and land use, including orderly and efficient transition in the urban interface; (2) open space, scenic, historic, scientific, and archeologic preservation, including education and interpretation; (3) maintaining opportunities for recreational use of scenic and recreational parkland for present and future generations; and (4) coordination, cooperation, and collaboration with others.

Benton Co. Parks System Comprehensive Plan,
1995

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Findings and References

8.2.c The Benton County Trails System Plan, adopted in 2003, establishes priorities for a network of trail linkages including water trails, abandoned railroad rights-of-way, rails with trails, and connections between communities and public-owned open space and natural areas.

Benton County Trail System Plan, 2003

8.2.d Benton County prepares management plans for county park sites and natural areas, including a mission statement, identification of recreation uses and activities suited to the site, and management policies and strategies.

Benton Co. Natural Areas & Parks Dept.

8.2.e The Corvallis 2020 Vision Statement envisions a green necklace of parks, scenic hillsides, natural habitats, and farm and forest lands surrounding the city.

Corvallis 2020 Vision Statement

8.2.f Benton County has been successful in collaborating and partnering with others and establishing positive working relationships with user groups, professionals, other agencies, volunteers, and non-profit groups.

Parks Board Workshop, 2004

8.2.g Federal lands: U. S. Forest Service – Marys Peak Scenic Botanical Area, Bureau of Land Management – Grass Mountain ACEC, Marys Peak ACEC, Marys Peak SRMA, Alsea Falls, Missouri Bend (Alsea River). Willamette River Parcels: scenic management areas along the main stem of the Willamette River (islands and shore lands within the Willamette River Greenway). U.S. Fish & Wildlife – Finley Wildlife Refuge. State – Washburne Wayside Park; Anderson State Park, Luckiamute State Park, E.E. Wilson Wildlife Area - Dept. of Fish and Wildlife.

Background Report
1979 Benton Co. Comp Plan
Oregon State Comprehensive Outdoor Rec. Plan

8.2.h Several miles of the N. and S. Fork Alsea River have been assessed by the Forest Service and BLM as suitable for potential addition to the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System, recognized for having scenic, fish, wildlife, and geologic values. The State has also identified the Alsea River as a potential study river. The Alsea and Lobster Creek community opposed federal or state designation of the Alsea River for scenic or wild river designation.

BLM, USFS Resource Management Plans
Alsea Public Outreach Mtg, 2004

8.3 Management

8.3.a Advanced technology, increased sales, and use of ATVs and other Off Road Vehicles are creating impacts on natural resources in rural areas, especially on federal lands. Some of the activity takes place in areas officially closed to motorized recreation.

Letter from Barry Wulff, Chair
Marys Peak Group, Sierra Club

8.3.b Trespass for hunting and target practice has historically been a problem, particularly in the Kings Valley area.

Benton Co. Natural Areas & Parks Dept.

8.3.c Increasingly trail users are experiencing conflicts. Benton County promotes the “Share the Trail” concept among mountain bikers, equestrian users, and hikers. Benton County places seasonal closures on some of its trails through private property to assure compatibility with adjacent land management activities.

Benton Co. Natural Areas & Parks Dept.

8.3.d Providing recreational access to the Willamette River faces a number of challenges, including lack of funding for management of 93 state-owned sites along the river (the Willamette Greenway has received limited financial commitment in

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Findings and References

spite of widespread popular support) and impacts of recreational use on the natural resource base - e.g. conflict between popular swimming holes and fish refuge on hot days.

Willamette Restoration Initiative, 1999

8.3.e In 2002, the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation adopted “A Framework for a Sustainable Future,” in response to the Governor’s Executive Order and the Oregon Sustainability Act (HB 3948). The framework outlines guiding principles and best management practices for achieving sustainability for parks and natural areas.

Oregon Dept. of Parks and Recreation
Website

8.5 Recreation Trail System

8.5.a Benton County is working toward a comprehensive system of trails including bicycle routes, walking and hiking trails, and equestrian trails. Emphasis is placed on partnerships with private property owners involving a variety of methods including easements.

Benton County Trails System Plan, 2003

8.5.b The Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation has completed a Statewide Trails Plan 2005-2014 that includes priorities for non-motorized, motorized, and water trails for regions of the state. Public forums and a telephone survey show a high interest in recreation trails in Oregon. The state acknowledges the Benton County Trails System Plan.

Oregon Dept. of Parks and Recreation
Trails Planning Program, 2004

8.5.c Economic benefits are derived directly from the development and operation of recreation trails. Direct

benefits include employment created and money spent on trails. Indirect benefits include the savings to community taxpayers when comparing the expense of trails to the expense of developing, operating, and maintaining other types of public recreational facilities.

Oregon Parks & Recreation Dept.,
Economic Benefits of Trails
Statewide Trails Planning Program, 2004

8.5.d Communities with trails often benefit in terms of improvements in corporate relocation and retention rates, since quality of life is an important factor in choosing sites for business and industry.

Oregon Parks & Recreation Dept.
Economic Benefits of Trails
Statewide Trails Planning Program, 2004

8.5.e There is an economic benefit as property values increase due to proximity to green space and increased overall community livability.

Oregon Parks & Recreation Dept.,
Economic Benefits of Trails; Statewide Trails
Planning Program, 2004

8.5.f The Mid-Willamette Connections program is a grass-roots effort that is exploring potential for better connections of communities in the Mid-Willamette Valley to the river. A water trail is proposed from Corvallis to Newberg, based on existing public lands.

Willamette Restoration Initiative, 1999

Note: These findings also are supported by results of a workshop held April 14, 2004 with the Benton County Parks Advisory Board.

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Findings and References

References

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