

Benton County Natural Areas & Parks

Outdoor Education & Recreation Program

5-Year Plan



Source: Gazette Times



Source: ODFW



Source: Benton County



Source: OSU-Extension Service- Benton County

“Develop partnerships to support implementation of sustainable and adaptable outdoor education and recreation programs that provide annual opportunities within priority Benton County Natural Areas & Parks, with an emphasis on rural and underserved youth and their families”

- Outdoor Education & Recreation Planning Team

Adopted: April 2016

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Special Thanks

This plan was inspired by the residents of Benton County, whom highly value our local natural environment and the numerous benefits that outdoor recreation and education programs provide in our communities. Many thanks are due to the long list of local partners that provide creative, inspiring, and fun programs for county residents. Their support and input made this plan possible, and will help grow the opportunities for providing these important services in our communities. Special thanks go to the volunteer Planning Team participants that provided their time, shared their wealth of knowledge, and helped shape a path forward. Lastly, we thank the Benton County Natural Areas & Parks Board and Board of Commissioners, for their strong support and willingness to provide initial funding to pilot outdoor programs and supporting the development of these important services within the Natural Areas & Parks Department.

Executive Summary

The primary goal for the first Benton County Outdoor Education & Recreation Program is for staff, and local partners to have a roadmap for developing and supporting education and recreation programs within priority county parks. The Benton County Natural Areas & Parks Comprehensive Plan (updated in 2012), captured strong public support for an outdoor program. The voluntary planning team composed of local partners developed the vision and goals for the 5- year plan:

Goals & Outcomes

- ▲ Collaborate and build on existing natural resources education and recreation program efforts to consistently provide outdoor education and recreation programming within Benton County natural areas and parks;
- ▲ Provide safe settings and opportunities for new outdoor learning and recreation with an emphasis on equitable programming, to ensure access and participation for all Benton County families;
- ▲ Support community livability and health through active living opportunities and respect for the natural environment;
- ▲ Work with local/regional partners to gain collaborative funding and innovative program development, helping to ensure long term sustainability of outdoor education and recreation programs within Benton County.

Outcomes developed by the planning team included:

- ▲ Develop an outdoor education and recreation plan that focuses on existing efforts and strengthens partnerships with local and regional government, non-profits, and private organizations;
- ▲ Create a sustainable funding model through a mixture of general fund, grants, and revenue generation to enhance current and future outdoor education efforts;

- ▲ Guide the design and initiate creation of outdoor education/recreation activities that are suited to the attributes and capacity of priority parks;
- ▲ Increase and strengthen the partnerships with local/regional government, and non-profit organizations to increase outdoor education and recreation at county natural areas and parks;
- ▲ Provides consistent performance measures to track the success and evaluate plan progress.

The needs assessment section provides a 'snapshot' of the county landscape, and calls attention to what health issues are a priority for the county and program opportunities to address these. Important sociodemographic trends were identified including:

- ▲ Rapidly aging population;
- ▲ Declining youth outdoor recreation/education, and
- ▲ Increasingly diverse population.

**Community
Needs**

Program actions to address these trends are supporting walking trails close to home, adapting to cultural needs, and promoting partnerships to increase participation. Most of the priority parks are located more than a half mile from most residents, making transportation the greatest barrier for residents to access these areas. Creating program activities, that provide transportation alternatives for this underserved population, will help address these issues and increase access and use of priority parks.

The 5-Year plan provides solutions for balancing current and future seasonal scheduling demands. Understanding and reducing scheduling conflicts that occur when staff is not notified about events is a priority. Building partnerships and communication to create and manage events, with advance scheduling is a priority. Conflicting uses can have negative outcomes on days where events impact reservation users and non-reservation users. There is also a concern for managing park capacity due to impacts on natural resources within the parks along with pressure on locations to accommodate all users. A program timeline has been created to address all of these major issues. This timeline will provide staff and local partners with ways to adapt all programs to more positively impact the community, while protecting park facilities and resources.

**Barriers &
Solutions**

The three major barriers to outdoor education/recreation participation include: transportation, funding and insurance. Due to the rural location of most parks, transportation is a major factor in use of priority parks. Funding is important to create alternative transportation and the ability for more programs, to better reach underserved populations close to home. Lastly, insurance requirements for program participants is described for the type of activities involved and the education or recreation program that is proposed. Insurance will be constantly evaluated to see if it fits within all needs and requirements.

The use of public and local partner (providers of outdoor ed/rec) surveys helped to gather further information on current programming and where the county can support these efforts. Survey findings also provide county staff and partners with ideas for future work that can be completed within park areas or programs to increase user experience.

Background

Benton County Natural Areas & Parks has long supported outdoor education and recreation opportunities within the county park system. Past support for education/recreation programs has been largely limited to 1.) Leading nature hikes, 2.) Providing fee waivers for facility rentals, and 3.) Connecting education/recreation groups to information and equipment whenever possible. Now there is department focus on consistently building and supporting outdoor education/recreation within the county parks. Given the changing demographics and societal desires for diverse opportunities to experience outdoor education and recreation in Benton County, a policy goal and implementation strategies were adopted as part of the Benton County Natural Areas & Parks Comprehensive Plan (updated in 2012) to direct development of outdoor education/recreation programs:

Adopted Policy Goal

“Place a high priority on education and community awareness”

Adopted Implementation Strategies

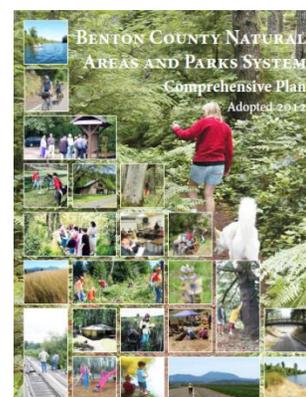
“Develop a plan for managing a comprehensive and strategic program for education and community awareness. Emphasis on working with the community, coordinating volunteers, and working with others in leadership positions to develop a program for communicating the value of nature and the rich natural, cultural, and historic heritage of Benton County. Potential for assisting with the Habitat Conservation Plan, partnering with the Benton County Health Department and the Healthy Kids, Healthy Community program”

“Involve students, faculty and others such as 4-H and Extension Service in projects to become directly involved in an environmental interpretation program at selected county sites such as preparing informational brochures, leading guided tours walks, continuing research efforts such as Fort Hoskins archeological work”

“Work with groups such as the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, historical organizations, and researchers (e.g. OSU – oral histories), to collaborate on projects to foster a greater awareness and appreciation for the cultural and historical heritage of Benton County”

“Prepare a comprehensive and strategic plan for engaging youth in the outdoors, including educational and recreational opportunities, and habitat restoration projects to instill a deeper appreciation of the outdoors and to improve youth fitness and reverse the effects of the “nature-deficit disorder”

“Consider designation of Beazell Education Center, Fort Hoskins Interpretive Center, and Jackson-Frazier Wetland as demonstration projects for engaging youth and the community through the most



advanced educational and interpretive methods; promote understanding and appreciation for heritage resources and progressive stewardship management programs”

“Collaborate with local conservation agencies, educators, and partners to create public awareness of the health implications of biodiversity loss and the role of conservation biology in community health”

“As part of the Natural Areas and Parks Department (NAPD) educational program, continue to partner with the Benton County Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities program, including a feasibility study of community gardens at county park sites to educate community members on sustainability, provide opportunity to exercise through gardening and increase access to healthy foods. Continue participation in the mini-grant program to provide infrastructure and transportation for healthy kids programs, such as day camps at Beazell and Fort Hoskins”

“As part of the NAPD educational program, develop a comprehensive and strategic plan for active engagement of volunteers in habitat restoration projects, including students; celebrate achievements, project leaders, and outstanding participant contributions with annual awards”

Figure 1. Outdoor Program Development Overview



Local Outdoor Education & Recreation Partners Kickoff Meetings
(7/11/15, 8/26/15)



Outdoor Education & Recreation Program Goals

Local and regional partner kickoff meetings (total of 23 organizations represented in 2 separate meetings) were successfully completed during the summer of 2015. The Natural Areas & Parks Department staff moved to develop a team of volunteers representing private, government, and non-profit organizations in the local community. The planning team was led by the departments’ Natural Resources Coordinator, and met monthly to guide and review the development of a 5-year plan.

During and after plan development, updates were provided to the local and regional partners that participated in kickoff meetings. Ideas provided by partners were reviewed and incorporated by the development team to update the plan.

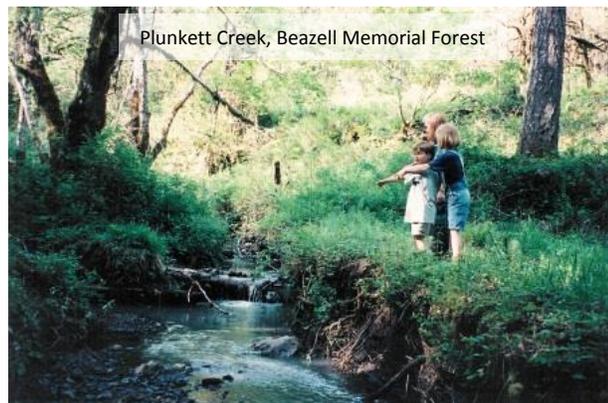
Outdoor Education & Recreation Outcomes

The desired outcomes developed and adopted by the outdoor education & recreation program plan development team, for the Benton County Natural Areas and Parks Department included:

- ▲ An outdoor education and recreation plan that focuses on existing efforts and strengthens partnerships with local and regional government, non-profits, and private organizations;
- ▲ Creating a sustainable funding model through a mixture of general fund, grants, and revenue generation to enhance current and future outdoor education efforts;
- ▲ Guide the design and initiate creation of outdoor education/recreation activities that are suited to the attributes and capacity of priority parks¹;
- ▲ Increase and strengthen partnerships with local and regional government, non-profit and private organizations to increase outdoor education and recreation at Benton County Natural Areas & Parks;
- ▲ Provides consistent performance measures to track successes and evaluate plan progress.

Benefits of Outdoor Education & Recreation

“Time in nature is not leisure time; it's an essential investment in our children's health (and also, by the way, in our own).” – Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder (2008)



Several important trends have been documented for outdoor education and recreation in the United States, and in Oregon within the last decade:

¹ 'Priority parks' are areas owned by Benton County and managed by Benton County Natural Areas & Parks Department that currently allow consistent public access and are desirable or suitable for outdoor education and recreation programs.

- ▲ Declining youth participation: In a three year study by ‘The Outdoor Foundation’ participation rates of the youngest girls and boys, ages 6 to 12, fell among girls from 77 percent to 58 percent and among boys from 79 percent to 69 percent (Outdoor Foundation, 2010);
- ▲ Recreation providers must respond to increasing population growth, an aging population, and development to properly address the impact of growth on quality of life (Oregon SCORP, 2013);
- ▲ In Oregon, the Hispanic population may triple by 2025 (Hall et. al., 2009)
- ▲ Low-income people participate at a much lower rate than higher income people in outdoor recreation, and the growing disparity between the wealthy and poor may create inequities in opportunities for participation (Hall et. al., 2009) ;
- ▲ Technology can help young people “plug into nature” by empowering them to observe and collect data about their local environments (STEM Blog, 2013);
- ▲ The cultivation of responsible and engaged citizenship by preparing students to address the challenges and opportunities they will face throughout their lives is a priority in Oregon (ODE, 2013).

Developing an outdoor education and recreation program that is responsive to regional and local trends, will depend greatly on partnerships and adaptation over time. It’s clear that there is a demand for opportunities closer to families. In addition, there is a desire from parents to have youth participate in structured programs, with experienced adults in a safe setting. Unstructured outdoor play has decreased over the past decade in favor of outdoor experience learning programs (SCORP, 2007).

Aligning with State and Local Initiatives

The following are existing state and local policy, guidelines, and standards that the Benton County Outdoor Education and Recreation Program and partners will utilize when developing program activities within the park system. An ‘Outdoor Education & Recreation Activity Checklist’ has been developed as a reference for the county and partners when creating or adapting new or current programs (see **Appendix A**).

No Oregon Child Left Inside Act (HB 2544)

During 2013, the State of Oregon Department of Education commissioned the Oregon Environmental Literacy Task Force resulting in a statewide plan: ‘Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan (OELP): Toward a Sustainable Future’. The goals of the Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan (the Plan) are to prepare students to address environmental challenges, contribute to a healthy outdoor lifestyle, and provide teachers the opportunity to improve their knowledge and their students’ knowledge of the environment inside and outside of the classroom (ODE, 2013).

It is a priority of the outdoor program at Benton County to ensure that county led, and partner led education projects be based on the core standards of the OELP. This will provide educators and others with consistency and a higher level of quality in the activity and learning achievements of students within the park system.

Current Education Standards and Next Generation Science Standards

When possible Benton County and their local partners will develop and support programs that are tied to educational standards in public schools. This will make these programs more attractive to K-12 teachers and administrators that are working to fulfill state standards.

In April 2013, the final Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), a new set of voluntary, rigorous, and internationally benchmarked standards for K-12 science education, were released. During the following months, the Oregon State Board of Education evaluated, and then adopted the NGSS (ODOE, 2013). Twenty-six states and their broad-based teams worked together with a 40-member writing team and partners throughout the country to develop the standards (NGSS, 2015).

The NGSS is a powerful tool that will be utilized by Benton County and their local partners, wherever possible, for current and future planning of outdoor education and recreation programs. By developing and supporting programs that are based on the NGSS, these will be more attractive to K-12 teachers and administrators that are working to fulfill state standards. The online database of NGSS standards allows an efficient way to evaluate the core ideas, performance expectations, and learning outcomes for the 4 major disciplinary areas (www.nextgenscience.org/search-standards-dci):

- Physical Sciences;
- Life Sciences;
- Earth & Space Sciences;
- Engineering, Technology, and Applications of Science.

Outdoor School bill for K-12

Under Section 2 of the Bill (<http://www.outdoorschoolforall.org/>) plan goals, Oregon State University Extension Service will be leading local efforts as funding becomes available. This bill is focused on providing an outdoor school program that has learning opportunities for students to learn about soil, water, plants and timber in agriculture. It also teaches students about local resources and the environment.

The screenshot shows the 'DCI Arrangements of Standards' page on the Next Generation Science Standards website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'HOME', 'ABOUT THE STANDARDS', 'WHY SCIENCE STANDARDS?', 'NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS' (highlighted), 'VOICES OF SUPPORT', and 'RESOURCES'. Below the navigation bar, there is a search bar and a 'SIGN UP TODAY FOR EMAIL UPDATES' button. The main content area is titled 'DCI Arrangements of Standards' and includes a note: 'You can also view topical arrangements of standards or search for individual performance expectations.' Below this, there is a 'Download a PDF' link and instructions for searching. The search interface features two dropdown menus: 'Grades' (with options K-2, K, 1, 2, 3-5, 3, 4, 5, Middle School (6-8)) and 'Disciplinary Core Idea' (with options Physical Sciences, -PS1A: Structure and Properties of Matter, -PS1B: Chemical Reactions, -PS1C: Nuclear Processes, -PS2A: Forces and Motion, -PS2B: Types of Interactions, -PS3A: Definitions of Energy, -PS3B: Conservation of Energy and Energy Transfer, -PS3C: Relationship between Energy and Forces). There are 'Search' and 'Reset' buttons at the bottom of the search interface.

Oregon Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Program (SCORP) guidelines

This comprehensive Oregon State Parks produced report, encourages coordination among all governmental agencies providing outdoor recreation areas and facilities in Oregon. Oregon Parks & Recreation Department (OPRD) acknowledges the adoption of Measure 66 by Oregon voters in 1999, which provided the Department the financial stability necessary to conduct long-term planning. This section of the OPRD planning website includes a variety of long-term plans, research reports, and programs intended to enhance the outdoor recreation opportunities available to all Oregonians:

http://www.oregon.gov/oprd/PLANS/Pages/SCORP_overview.aspx



Needs Assessment

Background

A needs assessment is a framework plan to help guide new policy and groundwork for a vision of the future (Benton County Natural Areas and Park Systems Plan Update 2012). New programs greatly benefit from capturing desires across the community (Harrison et. al., 2012). Guiding questions for the programs' needs assessment include:

- ▲ *What are highest priority outdoor education and recreation needs in Benton County?*
- ▲ *Is there agreement across local residents and partners, about the relevance and importance of the needs?*

As a first step in the planning process, defining the needs often helps with setting priorities for program implementation. Assessing current resources within the community is equally important, in addition to gathering underserved population needs.

Access and proximity to places with recreational opportunities, is associated with a higher rate of physical activity along with lower obesity levels and other health issues (Benton County Community Health Assessment, 2013). The Benton County Health Status Report 2012 identified several trends that help inform 5-year plan development including:

- ▲ Rapidly aging population;
- ▲ Declining youth outdoor recreation; and
- ▲ Increasingly diverse population.

Figure 2. Key Findings related to Outdoor Education & Recreation- Benton County Health Status



Common ways to address identified needs and issues often include:

- ▲ Walking trails close to home;
- ▲ Adapting to cultural needs; and
- ▲ Promoting physical activity to reduce chronic disease and increase overall health.

The use of a survey provided to the local community, was used to determine current programs and amount of use (see **Survey Findings**). Kickoff planning meetings with local partners including the Benton County Natural Resources Educators Working Group, OSU Extension 4-H programs, and other local non-profit and private organizations also helped inform plan development (see **Partner Organization Input**). **Appendix B** provides the key points in the county comprehensive plan that target education and recreation use including park access, connecting recreation and education at parks along with increased opportunities to connect trails and add more access to the disabled and the elderly.

Staff also developed overview maps, from US Census information in combination with Benton County GIS mapping data, to inform current priority park selection (see **Priority Parks**), connectivity, and key county level demographics. The following maps provide this key background information to Benton County and local partners when developing and implementing outdoor programs.

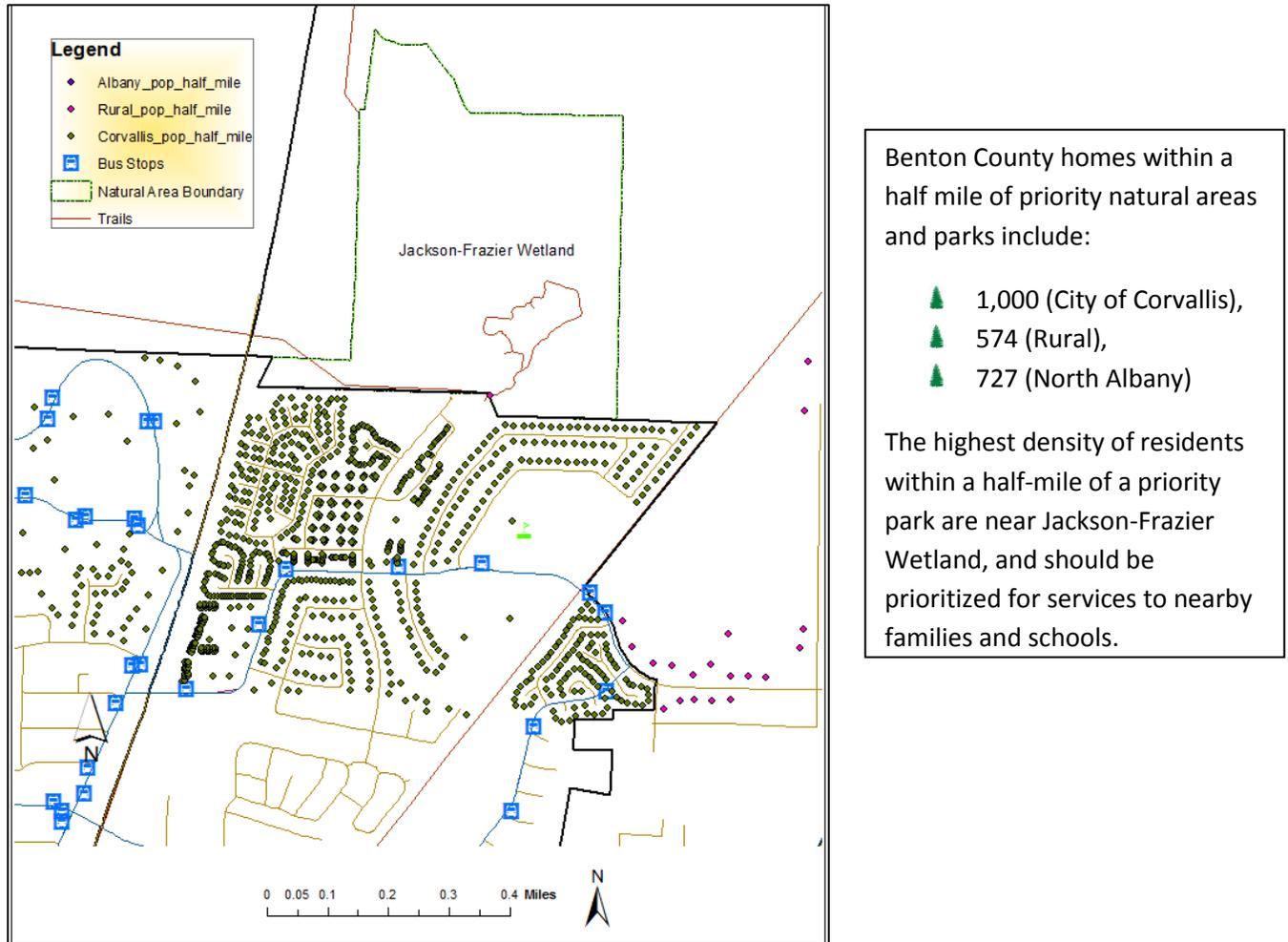


Figure 3. Residences, Schools, and Transportation within ½ mile from Jackson-Frazier Wetland

The majority of priority county parks are greater than a half mile from residents within Benton County, creating issues for easy access. There are several hundred rural residents near natural areas including Fitton Green Natural Area, and the popular Beazell Memorial Forest. There are nearby trails and roadsides, however due the majority of parks being outside of incorporated cities, there are transportation barriers and safety concerns for the public desiring to walk or bike to a park. Developing programs that address these transportation issues, and prioritizes opportunities to overcome them, will help achieve goals of increasing underserved population participation. Creating programs that support walking and biking along with bus transportation, especially near urban areas of North Albany, Adair Village, and Corvallis is also valuable in achieving increased participation goals.

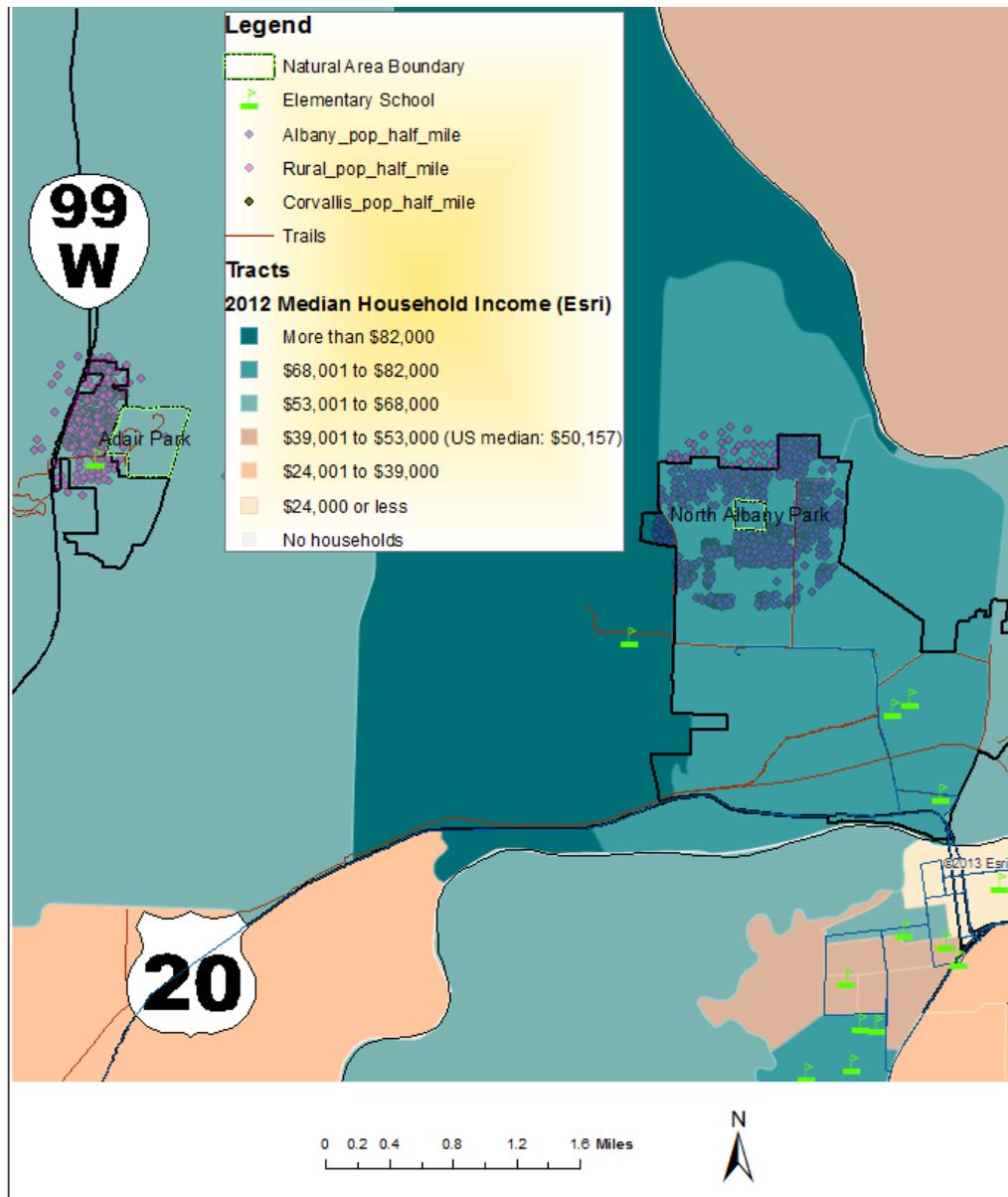


Figure 4. Demographic Overview of North Albany Park and Adair Village

North Albany Park and Adair Village Park has a high volume of middle to upper middle income families, within a half mile of these county parks. There are currently no county led outdoor education and recreation programs within these areas. Given the local demographics, it's likely that programs tailored to the priority park features would be well received by the residents. There is also a new ~10 acre natural area being acquired adjacent to North Albany Park, that can provide a unique open space surrounded by high density residential development. Connecting with nearby North Albany and Adair Village schools to provide school field trips/activities within these parks should be a priority.

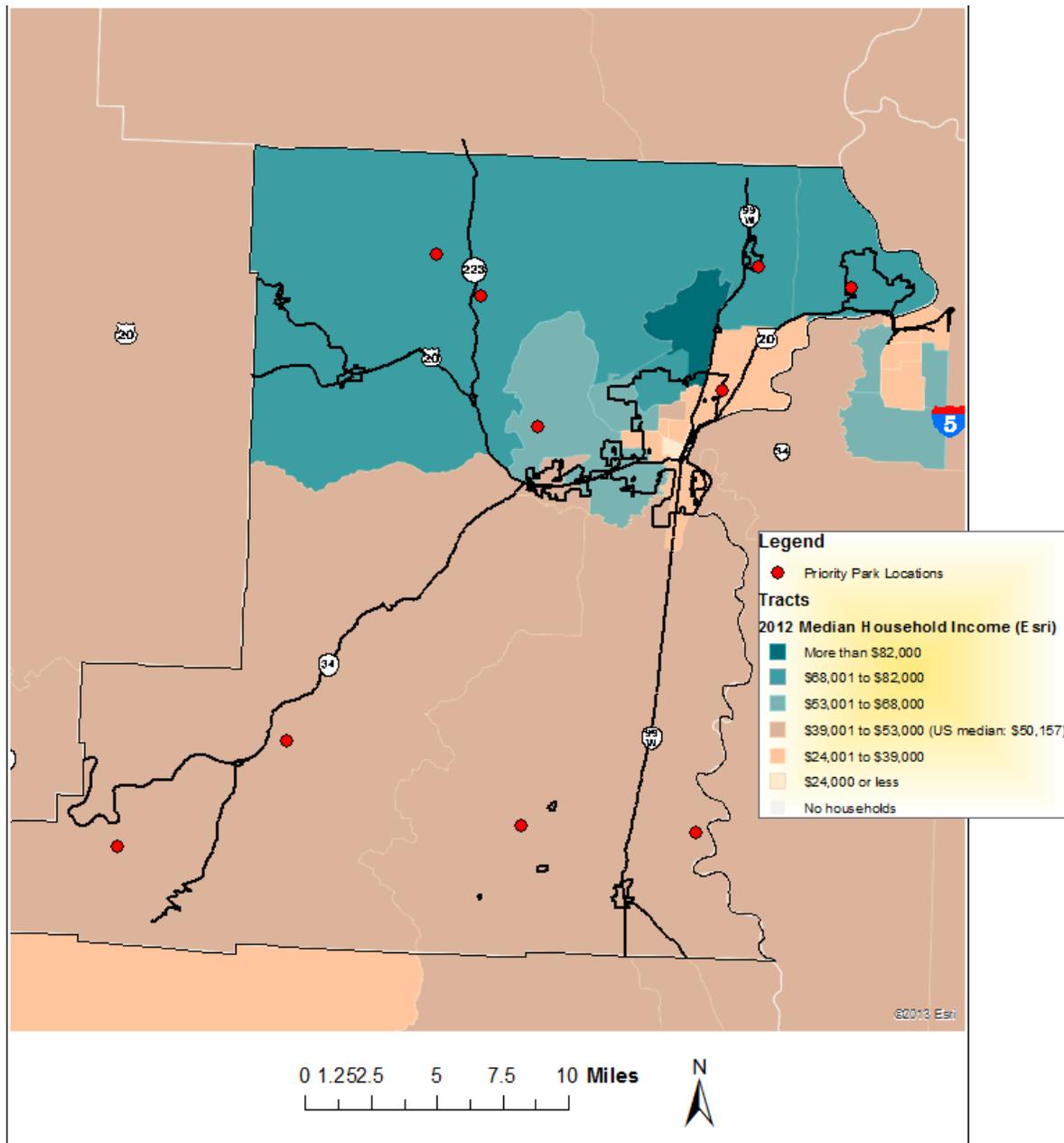


Figure 5. Countywide Median Household Income (US Census) and Priority County Parks

Within Benton County, there is a clear divide in median household income which correlates with the interest and ability to participate in outdoor education and recreation. South Benton County has only two priority parks (not including Alsea River corridor) with small acreage, minimal trail systems, and limited facilities. County parks located North of the City of Corvallis have much greater opportunities for outdoor programs given the size and ecological diversity, facilities, trails, and other amenities. Developing facilities in south Benton County that will support outdoor education and recreation goals is a priority. Finding ways to increase participation of south county residents in priority parks countywide is also a priority.

Priority Parks & Capacity for Outdoor Education & Recreation Programs

Priority parks were identified by staff and the planning team, as areas owned by Benton County and managed by Benton County Natural Areas & Parks Department. These natural areas and parks currently allow consistent public access and are desirable or suitable for outdoor education and recreation programs, and have the capacity for programming. The full Priority Park & Capacity information can be reviewed in **Appendix D**. Below is a summary of priority park locations and the most suitable programs given current park capacity and amenities.

Common user groups within priority parks:

- ▲ Underserved youth,
- ▲ Dog walkers,
- ▲ Families,
- ▲ Mountain bikers,
- ▲ Horseback riders,
- ▲ OSU students,
- ▲ Handicapped,
- ▲ Large groups/reservations,
- ▲ Schools,
- ▲ Elderly,
- ▲ Boaters/kayakers, and
- ▲ Sport fishermen

Priority Park Locations & Capacity Information

- ▲ Adair County Park
- ▲ Bezell Memorial Forest
- ▲ Bellfountain County Park
- ▲ Clemens Park
- ▲ Fort Hoskins Historic Park
- ▲ Fitton Green Natural Area
- ▲ Irish Bend Park
- ▲ Jackson-Frazier Wetland
- ▲ Mill Creek
- ▲ North Albany Park
- ▲ Salmonberry Campground

Goals:

- * Share information with regional partners on park amenities and capacity for major types of outdoor and indoor programs,
- * Identify opportunities for collaboration,
- * Help guide participation and joint project/program development activities,
- * Establish and balance scheduling demands as early as possible prior to peak season (spring-early fall)
- * Alleviate heavy seasonal use impacts through advance planning

Figure 6. Summary List of Priority Parks for Outdoor Education & Recreation Programs

*See Appendix D for Key
and Details*

Summary of Priority Park Capacity

Table 1 below, provides a summary overview of priority county parks and major categories of suitable programming (see **Appendix D** for full Priority Parks and Capacity Information). These provide guidance to staff and partners when developing and implementing programs.

Priority Park or Natural Area	Compatible & Desired Types of Outdoor Programs	Program Examples
Adair County Park		Recreation (Athletics & Games), Trainings
Bezell Memorial Forest		Indoor/outdoor combination, K-12, working landscape, nature hikes
Bellfountain County Park		Natural and cultural history, citizen science, K-12
Clemens Park		Fishing, boating, wilderness survival, salmon ecology, nature hikes
Fort Hoskins Historic Park		Natural and cultural history, citizen science, K-12 focus, working landscape/natural resources
Fitton Green Natural Area		Biking/horse riding (other adventure sports), nature hikes, natural and cultural history
Irish Bend Park		Fishing, boating, wilderness survival, nature hikes, natural and cultural history
Jackson-Frazier Wetland		Nature hikes, natural and cultural history, citizen science, K-12 focus
Mill Creek		Boating access and shuttle locations along Alsea River
North Albany Park		Athletics and games, outdoor training, biking, urban forestry and natural spaces
Salmonberry Campground		Overnight programs, Fishing, boating, wilderness survival, salmon ecology, nature hikes, natural and cultural history

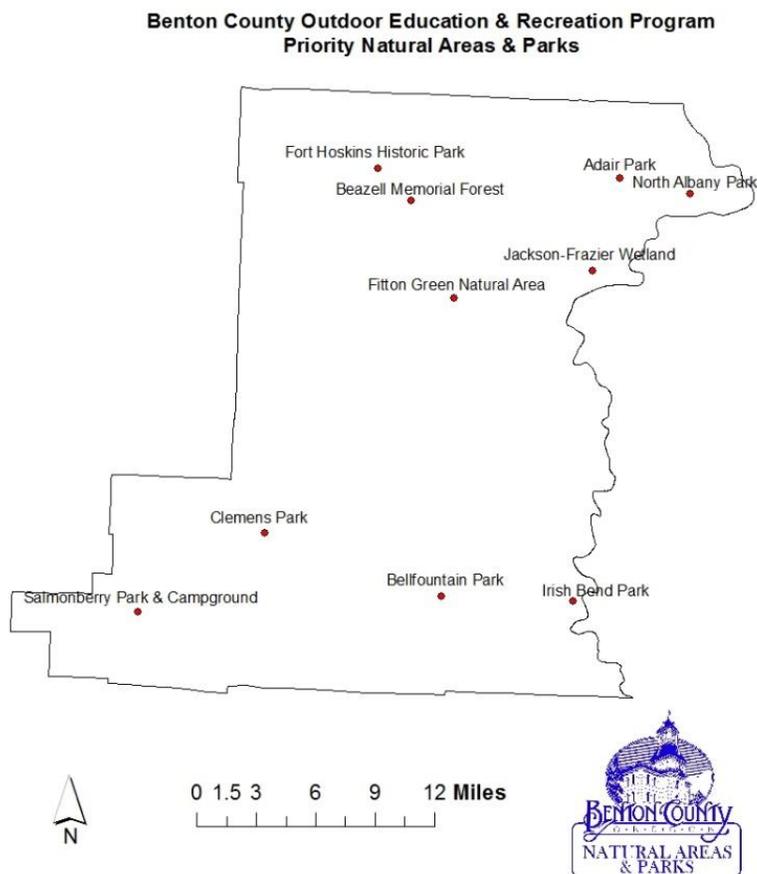


Figure 7. Priority Benton County Parks
Overview Map

increases ease and use. Since the elderly are all at different levels of endurance it is important to have parks and recreation areas that meet all needs whether it is flat walk ways or tougher hiking terrain. The current priority park locations all have at least partial compliance with the American Disabilities Act (ADA), with all future construction prioritized to be ADA compliant.

Underserved Population Areas

For the purposes of this plan, 'underserved' is defined as any resident of Benton County that is not able, or has currently chosen to not participate in county outdoor recreation and education. It can also mean that services are significantly unavailable within a certain service area for either the general public or a specific population (Oregon Administrative Rule 2015). This currently includes about 20% of the Benton County population that is living below the federal poverty line (Community Health Assessment 2012). Within Benton County this includes Corvallis and rural towns, including the following school districts (SD): Corvallis SD, Alsea SD, Monroe SD, and Philomath SD (Community Health Assessment 2012).

Select parks currently have annual education and recreation program activities that depend on facilities supporting this work. In addition, educational materials have been developed by county staff or partners and can be utilized when developing new programs.

Community Setting

Accessibility

Depending on mobility of the participants in outdoor programs, certain priority parks and areas within these parks are more accessible. For a park to be accessible for the elderly and disabled it should have benches along trails for places to stop. For wheel chair access pavement

It is estimated that 21% of the Benton County population resides in a rural area (Community Health Assessment 2012) that face certain barriers for participation. Local partners, such as Strengthening Rural Families, currently work to build stronger families and communities within rural Benton County (Strengthening Rural Families 2015). They are currently creating programming to benefit the health of community members along with more education programs (Strengthening Rural Families 2015). The county can support these rural community goals by partnering with groups to support rural community engagement.

Elder Education and Access to Decrease Health Risks

Currently there are no Benton County Natural Areas & Parks education or recreation programs offered to provide elderly residents with activities within local parks and surrounding areas. The primary options with local senior specific classes are through the Chintimini Senior Center and Osborn Aquatic Center, operated by the City of Corvallis. Developing pilot programs such as those offered by Portland Parks & Recreation, where there is a range of offerings for walking and hiking programs that offer 4 levels based off of endurance and strength. The use of pickup locations with passenger vans increases the accessibility to participants. Developing partnerships to engage the elder community to participate and become more aware of parks/facilities to stay active is a major goal of the program.

Program Structure

A conceptual model was developed based on park capacity information, current demographic information, and partner/community survey input. The model provides guidance to focus program development and partnerships at the community level. Adapting and aligning community desires to the most suitable park location provides Benton County and others with the priorities for outdoor education and recreation programming.

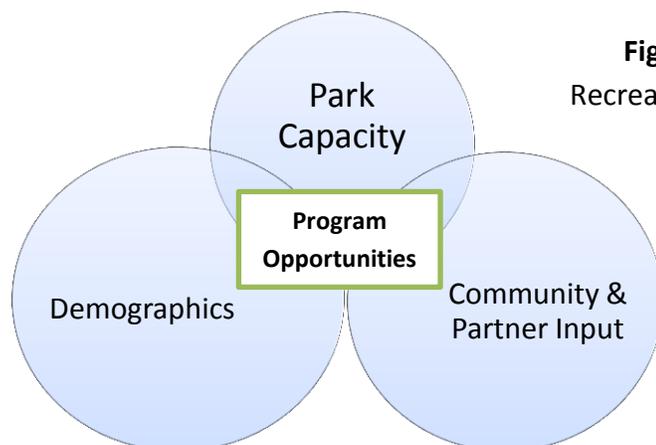


Figure 8. Outdoor Education & Recreation Program Conceptual Model

Outdoor Education & Recreation Partner Organization Input

Several local and regional organizations provide education and recreation opportunities to residents. During summer 2015, 23 partners provided information on their programs at July and August meetings coordinated by Benton County Natural Areas & Parks with support from Benton County Health Department (see **Appendix C** for inventory of participant programs). In addition, several partners provided input on program ideas as part of the Partner Survey developed by the planning team (see **Survey Findings**).

Several important findings came from the kickoff meetings, including what the primary audience has been for outdoor education and recreation programs offered.

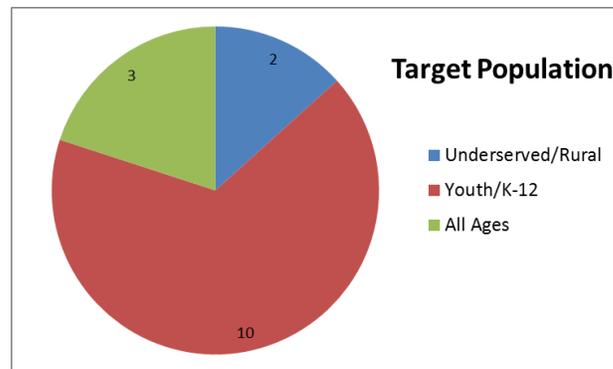
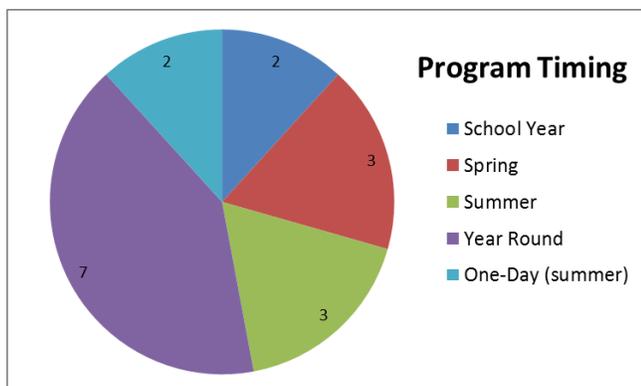


Figure 9. Partner Programs Inventory

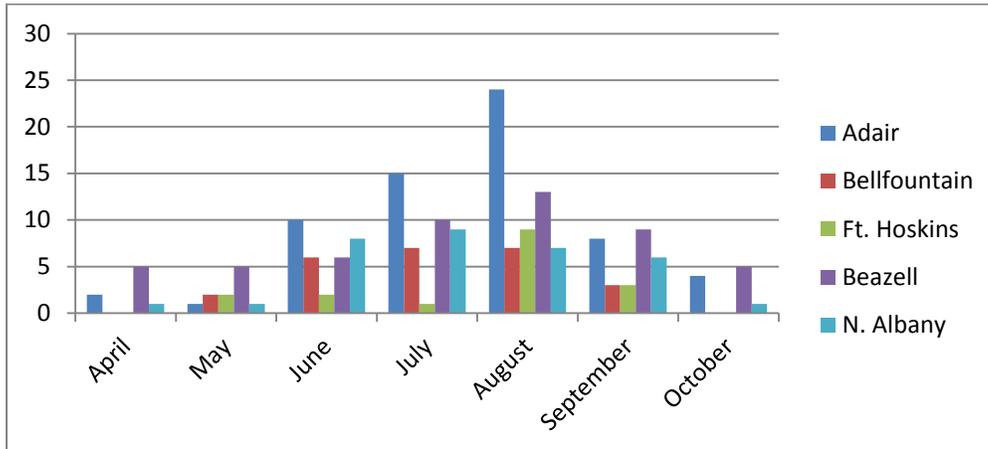
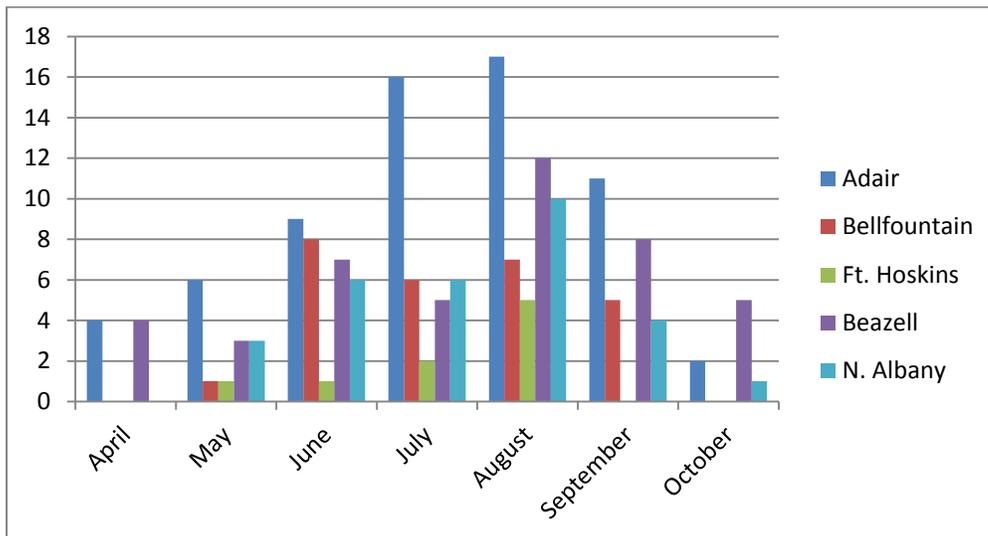
Participants shared about the program offerings throughout the year. However, these were limited to OSU, OSU-Extension, Corvallis Environmental Center/Avery House and the City of Corvallis Parks and Recreation Department programs. In total, the majority of programs offered, occur during the spring and summer months. This timing results in greater participation than Fall and Winter programs, resulting in scheduling demands during peak season. In addition there is a youth/k-12 focus, with emphasis on elementary school students. The inventory completed at the kickoff meetings provides ideas for partnerships, and areas where programs are lacking and could be developed to serve community interests.

Figure 10. Partner Programs Timing



Program Demand & Scheduling

The highest use season within county parks managed property is April-September. Currently, there is no information collected on daily individual usage. By using reservation data for parks that allow citizens to reserve the park facility, daily individual usage is assumed to be highest during the highest reservation period as shown for the past two years.

Figure 11. 2014 Peak Season Park Rentals**Figure 12. 2015 Peak Season Park Rentals**

As shown in the reservation data, the highest use of park facilities/areas that can be reserved, occur within Adair and Beazell Memorial Forest parks. There is a major increase in park reservation/use at North Albany during peak season due to the picnic/kitchen shelter areas for family events and increasingly dense subdivisions surrounding the park. When reviewing a full 4-year period of total annual reservations within priority county parks, there is a consistent order of priority as shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. 2011-2015 Annual Reservations within Benton County Parks during Peak Season

Park/Facility Name	Number of Reservation Groups					Number of Reported Users				
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Adair "A"	20	16	24	25	21	2,340	1,490	1,091	1,225	1,385
Adair "B"	12	10	12	13	7	450	810	880	1,055	340
Adair A & B	11	17	13	12	17	1,600	2,050	3,002	2,590	2,020
Bellfountain	30	32	31	25	27	2,150	2,430	2,130	2,175	1,630
Fort Hoskins	9	12	16	16	12	565	365	495	691	640
North Albany	32	29	35	30	30	2,250	2,050	1,570	1,765	1,765
YEARLY TOTALS	114	116	131	121	114	7,771	9,195	9,168	11,515	9,795
Bezell Forest Education Center										
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
BEAZELL YEARLY TOTALS	56	44	50	46	52	3,549	3,549	3,678	3,675	4,040
BEAZELL FEE WAIVER SUMMARY	14	4	8	9	8	3,260	3,260	438	779	395

Table 3. Priority Order of Park Reservations based on 2011-2015 Reservation Data

Priority Order	Park Location and Reservation Facilities
1.	Bezell Memorial Forest Education Center
2.	Adair Park Picnic Area, Cook Shelter
3.	North Albany Picnic Area, Cook Shelter
4.	Bellfountain Picnic Shelter Area
5.	Fort Hoskins Picnic Area, Cook Shelter

A major goal for this plan is to better allow the needed spaces and times for outdoor programs during peak season. Problems that can result are conflicts with general park users that have reserved parks, and outdoor education and recreation program leaders that have not reserved park facilities. In the past, outdoor education and recreation projects are often not scheduled more than a few weeks or days in advance, and potentially not coordinated with county parks department staff that the event is occurring. Potential conflicts that can result from limited or no coordination between Benton County Natural Areas & Parks and outdoor education/recreation programs that use county parks includes:

- ▲ Pressuring users to other locations;
- ▲ Limiting parking, bathrooms, and other facility use;
- ▲ Inadequate maintenance prior to activity date;
- ▲ Decreasing quality of park experience leading to future decrease in use.

These conflicts commonly arise when park users are present during the same day as non-reservation park users. Impacts to other park user experiences are known to occur, when a facility is reserved for a portion or entire day and parking is limited. In these instances, the outdoor experiences are more likely to be less rewarding and can reduce the areas where outdoor programs can occur within the park/natural area.

A concern with managing park capacity, within current priority parks (see **Appendix D**, Priority Parks and Capacity), also includes impacts to natural resources including threatened and endangered species and associated habitats. Historically, there has been limited or no user impacts to these areas. Management actions to reduce natural resources impact include:

- ▲ Designated trail system;
- ▲ Reducing viewsheds and access to sensitive areas including prairies and streams/wetlands;
- ▲ Public education and outreach focused on value of native habitats.

By encouraging current and future providers of outdoor education and recreation to complete an activity checklist and special use permit, an increase in quality of experience will occur. Working with county staff to support development and scheduling of programs will also benefit participants and collaborating partners.

Outdoor education and recreation program participants are likely to want to have direct experience with native habitat. This can result in impacts to these desirable areas. An outdoor program that supports increased use of parks by a broad group of users has the potential to increase negative habitat impacts. Existing and new management tools for reducing these impacts include:

- ▲ Advance scheduling of programs to reduce daily amount of users in shared locations;
- ▲ Continual updates and management to designated site access areas and trail locations;
- ▲ Constant communication with local outdoor program leaders and to their participant groups.

Program Timeline & Performance Measures

The following are major program goals with associated ways of tracking successes and progress, while informing staff and partners when developing or adapting programs.

Table 4. Program Goals & Performance Measures (2016-2021)

2016

Program Goals	Performance Measures
Beazell Education Center classroom enhancements including: locking cabinets, educational interior	1. Completion of classroom updates, annual additions

decoration, priority scheduling for ed/rec groups	2. County Special Use Permit tracking of Education center reservation/use
Creation of program budget	3. Dedicated account for program 4. Funding includes general fund, grant fund, and fees
Outdoor programs included in natural areas & parks dept. communication strategy	5. Completion and implementation of strategy
Evaluate and gain program intern support as needed	6. Determine what support is needed 7. Gain seasonal support
FOCUS-OSU Extension Benton County at Beazell	8. Successful completion 9. Different student participation from 2015 with equal or greater student total
Kings Valley Charter School, Streamside Education learning activities	10. Class completes spring and/or fall project within riparian planting area 11. Design and build sign for area
Natural Resources Celebration Week at Fitton Green Natural Area, Beazell, and Fort Hoskins	12. Participation of at least 40 total members
OSU Pre-Kindergarten day at Beazell	13. 60+ students completing hands on activities
Participation in partnership with Health Department at Get Outdoors Day	14. 50+ visitor participation at booth
Development and implementation of outdoor programming partnership with City of Corvallis	15. 1-3 day long activities for 3 rd -5 th graders in priority county parks 16. Evaluation of resident participation and program cost recovery
Secure Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife outdoor education certification and begin partnering	17. Training completed 18. Checkout resources for outdoor programs
Development of web page within current site, dedicated to outdoor ed/rec opportunities	19. Creation of web page 20. All current information on programs listed 21. Dedicated bilingual page
Support of local groups and partners to complete outdoor education and recreation in county parks	22. Track all organized programming using county Special Use Permit system
Secure grant funding with local partners	23. Grant secured, match secured
Develop means of determining casual use of parks	24. Development or securing of log book
Partner with OSU Extension master naturalists	25. Design and completion of 2 program activities for 2017

2017

Program Goals	Performance Measures
Implement method for estimating park use by individuals	1. Participation by at least 100 park users
Secure seasonal support for program implementation	2. Utilize interns and establish consistent volunteer base to implement programs
Continue and expand 2016 programming	3. Evaluate capacity and participation and increase wherever possible
Hold a focus group with local partners (i.e. PTAs)	4. Minimum of 2 focus groups held during

to engage them outdoor opportunities	2017
Annual update to Parks Advisory Board and Board of Commissioners	5. Programs completed type and amount of participation provided at December meeting
Participate in a community health fair	6. Table and activities and health fair
Update Program Budget	7. Evaluate staff capacity and costs to expand

2018-2021

Program Goals	Performance Measures
Continue 2016,2017 established priority programming	1. Increase in existing program participation rates where possible
Development of adult and elder focused programs	2. Complete at least 1 adult/elder program that includes active living component 3. Implement adult focused program with 20+ participants
Implement new general fund and grant funded projects with local partners	4. Successful program creation 5. Implementation of at least 1 new program per year
Sustainable funding model developed	6. Prioritized programming 7. Consistent fee recovery programs 8. Grants secured with partners
Provide the opportunity for youth to participate in an outdoor education/recreation program, at every Benton County priority park	9. A minimum of 1 outdoor program occurs annually at every current priority park

Program Funding

Developing the processes and systems for budgeting and financial operations for an outdoor program, requires consideration of:

- ▲ Regional community needs;
- ▲ Organizational resources;
- ▲ Program opportunities;
- ▲ Expenses, and
- ▲ Potential revenues

Through this plan, a mix of programs and services can be created. These help maximize opportunities, efficiency, effectiveness, and ultimately participant satisfaction and learning (Harrison et. al., 2012).

By April 2016, the department will finalize and implement an Outdoor Education and Recreation Program budget that includes all major budget components including identified

expenses and potential revenue through the current budget biennium (ending June 30th, 2017). The goal is to begin developing a mixture of county general fund, county parks fund, reserve funds, alternative funding (i.e. grants), and fee supported funding for priority programs.

Policy & Risk management

Evaluating and planning for safe education and recreation programs within county parks is of highest priority. Benton County is constantly monitoring and adapting to reduce risks in county managed natural areas and parks. There is inherent risk in the use of outdoor spaces and facilities, whether participating as an individual or member of a group.

The following sections provide important details on current county policies, and options available for county led or partnership driven outdoor/education program. Included are current requirements to achieve compliance with county and local partner risk management policies. Policies and standards will be updated as needed, and be required as necessary after implementation of the

Current park policy

Benton County Natural Areas & Parks currently follows the risk management requirements set forth by county counsel, and require additional insurance coverage for certain events. In addition, the Benton County Volunteer Policy (see **Appendix E** for volunteer waiver) provides assurance that multi-day volunteers are vetted and are covered under necessary insurance.

Partner Led Program with County Support

Organizations or individuals leading education and recreation programs within Benton County Natural Areas & Parks are required to complete the most current Special Use Permit (see **Appendix A**). Benton County will continue to support organizations that lead outdoor programs including:

- ▲ Program coordination;
- ▲ Reservations;
- ▲ Instructor support; and
- ▲ Materials

Depending on the type of program goals and actions, responsible organizations will be liable for acquiring sufficient to cover program activities. These outdoor program service providers should be in compliance with insurance/liability coverage deemed necessary by their respective insurance underwriters. These types of collaboration build social capital (Fields, 2003), or

unquantifiable good will, positive perceptions, and networking by the program within the community.

Benton County Contracts for Services

Contractors can provide a range of specialized programs and equipment that are not available to county staff due to diverse work loads and budget constraints. Contracting for high quality outdoor education and recreation provides residents with a diversity of experiences when specialized training and skills are required, such as:

- ▲ Boating;
- ▲ Survival;
- ▲ Ecology;
- ▲ Cultural History; and
- ▲ Hunting & Fishing and other skills

In the event that the county contracts for outdoor education and recreation services, insurance requirements (liability, aggregate, other as needed) will be determined on a program by program basis using the current county risk management process. Requirements will be included in services contracts. In all cases, current county insurance coverage will provide additional coverage as determined necessary under current county risk management. Contractors can include private, public, and non-profits that are supporting administration and other program delivery services. A priority is to partner with City of Corvallis during Summer 2016, to pilot outdoor programs for a market rate fee. The City of Corvallis Parks and Recreation Department, through their Activity Guide programming, had: 7,235 customers overall and 359 non-residents in Federal Year 2014-15. These were individuals with registrations as customers that could have registered multiple times. The Activity guide released during Fall/Winter and Spring/Summer provides programming to ~60% of the Benton County population (pers. Comms. Deb Curtis, City of Corvallis), and is an excellent partnership opportunity.

Benton County Led Program

For any activities that are designed and implemented primarily by Benton County Natural Areas & Parks staff, the current risk management process will be utilized. In addition, the previously described volunteer policy will be commonly used to provide adequate staffing. Select staff has completed training including outdoor skills, hunting and fishing education, natural resources management and other outdoor education and recreation. Continued training and development of county led programs such as Natural Resources Celebration week will be a priority. Benton County has also established a joint pilot program with City of Corvallis Parks &

Recreation department to begin partnering on providing new outdoor activities to the communities within Benton County. Future identified collaborations are shown on the 5-Year timeline (see **Timeline**) including joint agreements for services, and working with the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife Outdoor skills program. There is also potential to determine ability to share background checks across organizations for shared volunteers and staff support.

Bilingual Priorities

In an effort to achieve program vision, goals and objectives for engaging underserved community members several bilingual elements were developed. These are noted on the program timeline and include:

- ▲ Working with the Benton County Health Navigators to engage their network within the Hispanic community;
- ▲ Develop a Spanish only dedicated webpage describing priority facilities and program opportunities;
- ▲ Hold focus group meetings with support from Health Navigators and others for translation services;
- ▲ Provide priority print media with translation.

Major Barriers

The major barriers identified during plan development are as follows in order of importance:

- ▲ **Transportation:** the majority of priority parks with facilities to support programs are greater than 5 miles from the highest population city areas within the county. Determining how to cost effectively transport, and entice personal transportation to parks will occur. In addition, providing information for walking, biking, or using public transportation to access parks will support this goal;
- ▲ **Funding:** sustainable outdoor education and recreation program funding will require a mix of general fund, fees, volunteers, and other funding. Ongoing evaluation and updates of the program budget will be needed to adapt to program demands and partnerships.
- ▲ **Insurance:** risk management requirements from county management and partners will need to be constantly evaluated and updated as requirements for insurance coverage change. Documenting successful and safe programming will help inform risk management as the program develops.

Survey Findings

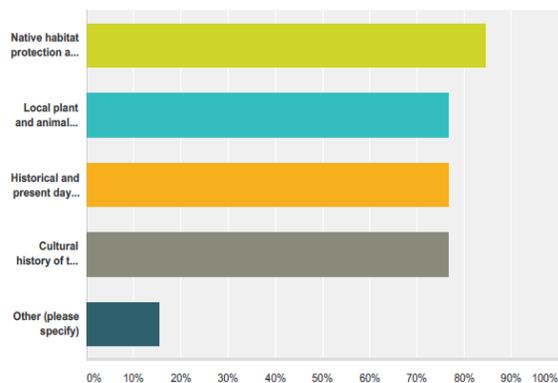
Two short surveys were developed to inform current and future program work, by learning from local partners and the general park users or community members. The Partner and Public surveys were developed by staff with input by the planning team. Final surveys were uploaded to SurveyMonkey.com and released for a total of three weeks during the project period. Staff will continue to utilize and update the survey, to allow for review and adaptation of the program and other work based on public input.

All findings from the local partner survey are located in **Appendix F**, and a summary of key responses is below:

- 🌲 15 responses, representing 13 different local organizations;
- 🌲 Several opportunity areas where no/limited outdoor education/recreation is occurring within priority parks was identified;
- 🌲 Many Ideas for new programming and overcoming barriers including: online calendar of events at parks, coordinating with county on transportation, funding, volunteers, and other support;
- 🌲 Proposed adult and elder programs as the majority of programs currently are for elementary school children;
- 🌲 Limited use of Special Use Permit process and communication with county staff, and other county resources to support partner programming due to lack of awareness.

Q9 Which of the current Benton County outdoor education topic areas are priorities for your organization and are partnership opportunities with Benton County? Please select all that apply.

Answered: 13 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses
Native habitat protection and enhancement	84.62% 11
Local plant and animal identification	76.92% 10
Historical and present day ecology	76.92% 10
Cultural history of the local area	76.92% 10
Other (please specify)	15.38% 2
Total Respondents: 13	

Figure 13. Partner Survey Responses for Outdoor Education Topic Areas & Priorities

All findings from the public survey are located in **Appendix G**, and a summary of key responses is below:

- 🌲 124 responses;
- 🌲 Support for developing outdoor education/recreation programs in partnership with local/regional groups;

- ▲ Hiking/walking, wildlife viewing, picnicking are most appealing recreation;
- ▲ Plant/animal identification and outdoor survival are most appealing education;
- ▲ General lack of awareness regarding parks projects and programs;
- ▲ Adair County Park was the highest use area for outdoor program survey participants due to disc golf participants (see **Appendix G**) followed by Beazell Memorial Forest, Jackson Frazier Wetland, and North Albany Park for top three priority parks.

Q8 What issues do you have in using Benton County Natural Areas & Parks?
Please select all that apply:

Answered: 107 Skipped: 17

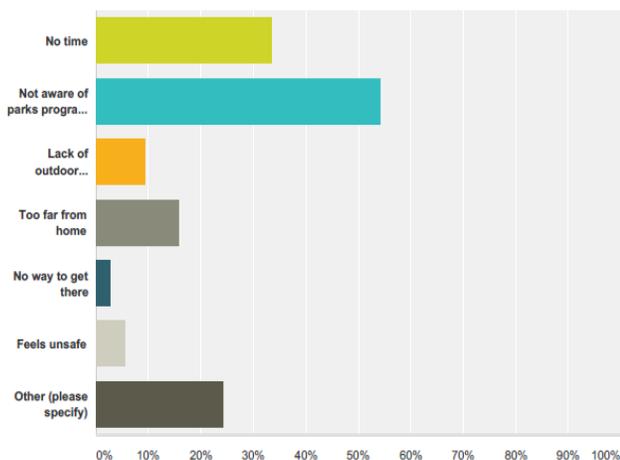


Figure 14. Public Survey Responses for issues in using Benton County Natural Areas & Parks

Answer Choices	Responses
No time	33.64% 36
Not aware of parks programs or facilities	54.21% 58
Lack of outdoor programs	9.35% 10
Too far from home	15.89% 17
No way to get there	2.80% 3
Feels unsafe	5.61% 6
Other (please specify)	24.30% 26
Total Respondents: 107	

Several specific recreation opportunities/interests were listed in survey responses including:

- ▲ Disc Golf (x28)
- ▲ Interact with nature in a hands on way (critter catching)
- ▲ Mushroom hunting
- ▲ Botanizing
- ▲ Off leash dog parks (x2)
- ▲ Looking at the wild scenery and nice surroundings
- ▲ Birding
- ▲ Sports (soccer, softball, Frisbee) one day schedule commitment not 3 months
- ▲ Geocaching (x2)
- ▲ Motorized boating & ATV trails
- ▲ Off leash dog park at North Albany Park
- ▲ Kids programs, nature appreciation, Jr. Naturalist
- ▲ Photography (x2)
- ▲ Mountain biking
- ▲ Trails with gravel or sawdust
- ▲ Swimming

Public and local partner survey responses (**Appendix F, G**), help inform development of outdoor programming, while also providing insights into management actions, plans, and policies for priority parks. As shown in the figure below, there is a clear desire for outdoor education and recreation programs within county priority parks.

Benton County Outdoor Education & Recreation Program: 5-Year Plan Public Questionnaire

Q9 What could help you or your family in using a county park more often? Please select all that apply:

Answered: 93 Skipped: 31

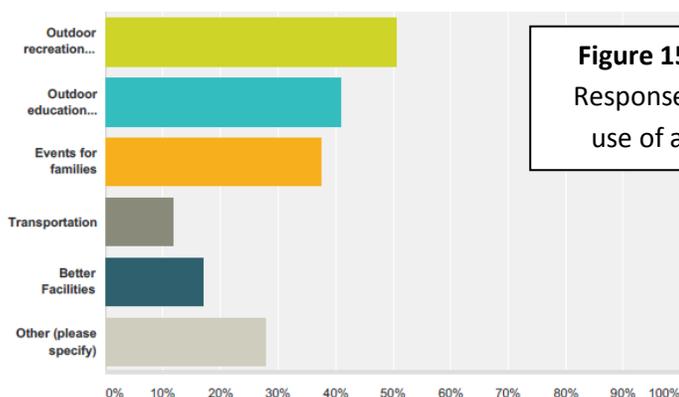


Figure 15. Public Survey Responses for increasing use of a priority parks

Answer Choices	Responses
Outdoor recreation programs	50.54% 47
Outdoor education programs	40.86% 38
Events for families	37.63% 35
Transportation	11.83% 11
Better Facilities	17.20% 16
Other (please specify)	27.96% 26
Total Respondents: 93	

Next Steps

Starting in spring of 2016, Benton County Natural Areas & Parks Department will begin implementation of plan goals by first enhancing and building on program partnerships that were established in the past year:

- ▲ ‘Forests, Organisms, Creeks, U Study (FOCUS)’;
- ▲ ‘Outdoor Summer Adventures in Benton County’;
- ▲ ‘Natural Areas Celebration Week’;

In addition, identified goals and related performance measures will be finalized and implemented. Through continued building of partnerships and networking with outdoor education and recreation partners, continued expansion of the program can occur. The demand within the community will determine the direction of program offerings, and will be evaluated annually when providing opportunities to the community. As successful programs are implemented and participation increases, the quality and availability will increase. These will help Benton County Natural Areas and Parks Department to continue to achieve the outdoor program plan vision:

“Develop partnerships to support implementation of sustainable and adaptable outdoor education and recreation programs that provide annual opportunities within priority Benton County Natural Areas & Parks, with an emphasis on rural and underserved youth and their families”

- Outdoor Education & Recreation Planning Team

Adopted: April 2016