



Fender's blue

Introducing...

Benton County's PRAIRIE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN



Benton County Oregon

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What is the Prairie Species Habitat Conservation Plan and how does Benton County benefit?

The Prairie Species Habitat Conservation Plan balances wildlife conservation with economic development in Benton County.

Some species of prairie habitats have become so rare that they are now listed as Threatened or Endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. For example, Fender's blue butterfly, an Endangered species, is protected on all lands, while several listed plants are regulated only on public lands.

Some types of activities, such as home construction, that affect listed species require federal permits. Under this Plan, a blanket permit will cover many activities conducted by the County, its residents, and Cooperators like the City of Corvallis and Oregon State University.

The Plan uses the best available science and conservation experience to identify where these species grow in Benton County, their individual habitat requirements, and best management practices for long term viability.

This Plan weaves together technical information, regulatory requirements and citizen involvement to improve the long-term outlook for Threatened and Endangered species and their habitats, making it easier for people to comply with federal law.

The Habitat Conservation Plan describes how the County will avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to Threatened, Endangered, and critically rare prairie species in the County. By planning in advance, the County can design and modify projects, such as road maintenance, to avoid or minimize impacts to the species, and complete any needed mitigation ahead of time. The Plan ensures that any restoration of rare prairie species populations is conducted where it will contribute the most to conservation of the species. Through this Plan, Benton County and its Cooperators have developed a network of conservation sites throughout Benton County.



Fender's blue on Kincaid's lupine



What species are included in the Plan?

The plan covers seven species that are listed as Threatened or Endangered (or are candidates for listing) by the US Fish and Wildlife Service or the State of Oregon. These include Fender's blue butterfly and its host plant, Kincaid's lupine, as well as Taylor's checkerspot butterfly, and four other plants: Willamette daisy, Bradshaw's lomatium, Nelson's checkermallow, and Peacock larkspur. Fender's blue butterfly is the only one of these species protected on private land — plants are only protected on public land.

Who developed the plan?

Benton County involved a wide range of groups and individuals during the development of the Plan. County staff and contractors talked with hundreds of citizens, biologists, agency personnel, and elected officials to gather information and perspectives. The process was guided by a broad-based Stakeholder Advisory Committee representing local agriculture and forestry interests, public and private landowners, watershed councils, and conservation groups. A Technical Advisory Committee with representation from academic researchers, biologists, and agency staff provided scientific guidance to the Plan's development.

Does the Plan affect how I manage my land?

Under this Habitat Conservation Plan, most activities on private property do not require a permit. For example, no special permission is required to maintain an existing garden, lawn, landscaped area, or driveway. Likewise, no permission is required to remove vegetation to maintain a 30-foot fire-break around existing structures. These activities do not result in new impacts to protected habitat. Construction activities do require a permit from Benton County.

Other activities are beyond the scope of this Plan and may need a permit from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Plowing to bring previously uncultivated land into production, or other ground-disturbing activities that represent a land use change may need federal authorization. Also, if you divide a property or re-zone it to allow additional buildable sites within Fender's blue butterfly habitat, you will need to obtain authorization from the US Fish and Wildlife Service prior to construction.

If I restore prairie habitat on my land, will it affect my neighbors?

No. Under provisions of this plan, even if Fender's blue butterflies cross onto neighboring lands those properties will not be affected. Habitat restoration on private lands is encouraged and comes without liability.

How do I get covered by the County's permit, and is there a fee?

In most cases, when you apply for a building permit for construction of a home or accessory structure, such as a garage or personal shop, in an area identified as habitat for Fender's blue butterfly, Benton County will handle both the paperwork to include you in the County's blanket permit and the mitigation to offset potential impacts of your construction activity.

There are no additional fees for this service. Benton County will issue you a building permit and a "take" permit that covers you under the Endangered Species Act.

If your property is in Fender's blue butterfly habitat but the underlying zone is something other than EFU, FC, RR, UR, or if your property was created by partition or subdivision after July 31, 2009, then Benton County can issue a permit only after you obtain written authorization from the US Fish and Wildlife Service for the project.

How does mitigation for impacts on private land work? Who pays for it?

Mitigation is the process of restoring or setting aside habitat to compensate for impacts. For many activities, mitigation will be completed by the County on public conservation lands at no charge. For activities that are not covered by the blanket permit, any mitigation required by the US Fish and Wildlife Service will be the responsibility of the property owner.

What else does the plan do?

Permits are only needed for impacts to listed species. This Plan goes further by guiding voluntary habitat conservation for a broad group of prairie and oak savanna-dependent species. The Plan includes a *Prairie Conservation Strategy* that identifies dozens of birds, plants and other wildlife that can benefit from local conservation, including species and actions identified in the *Oregon Conservation Strategy*, the overarching state strategy for conserving fish and wildlife.



Taylor's checkerspot

What can I do to help?

Check out the *Prairie Conservation Strategy*, where you will find a menu of possible actions, as well as some sources of technical and financial help. It contains maps showing where conservation efforts are most needed, explains the habitat requirements for a diversity of prairie species, from birds to plants to butterflies, and how to help them. Participation in the Strategy is voluntary, and you can download a copy from the County's website, below.

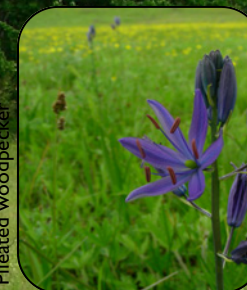
For complete details, refer to the Habitat Conservation Plan, the Benton County Development Code, or contact Benton County staff.

Visit the Prairie Species Habitat Conservation Plan website at:

www.co.benton.or.us/parks/hcp



Pileated woodpecker



Great camas